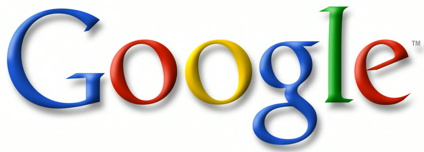
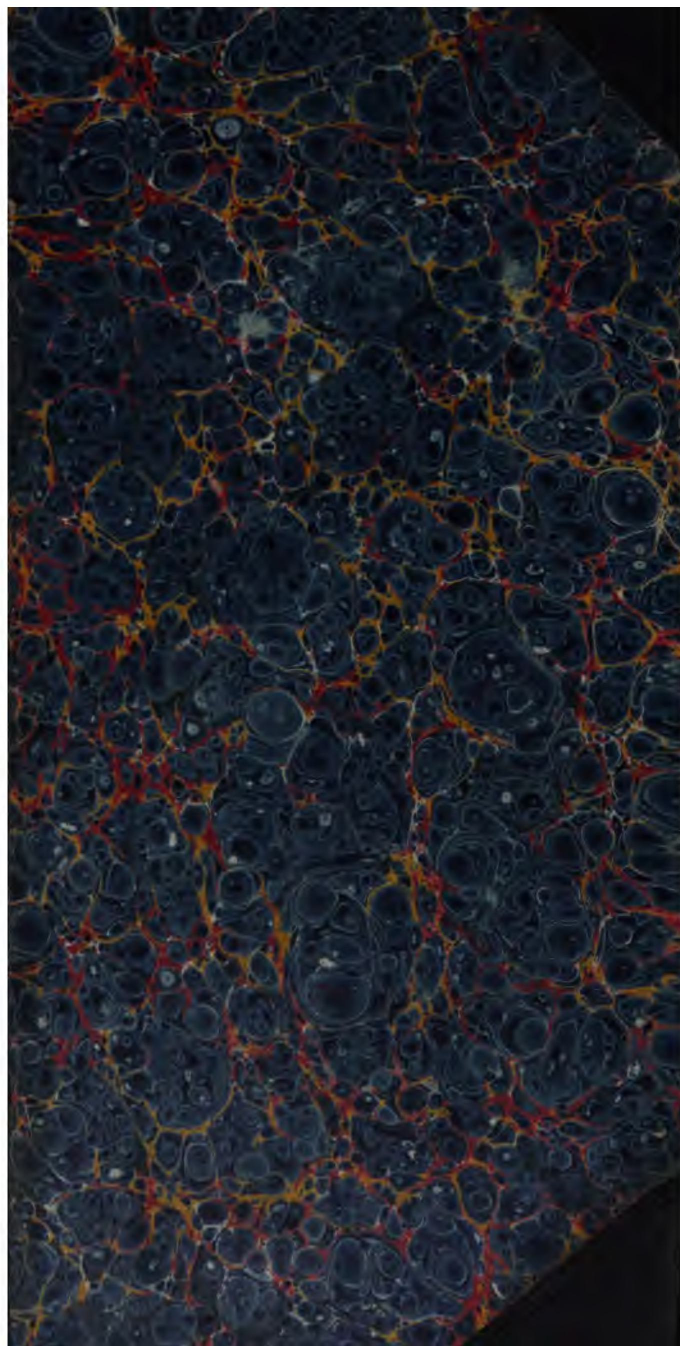
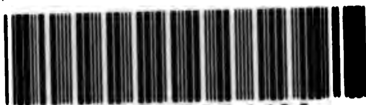
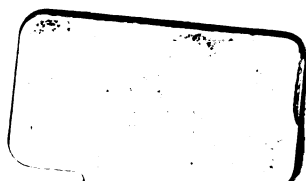








MELMOTH HOUSE:

A NOVEL.

IN

THREE VOLUMES,

BY

MRS. J. JENNER.

VOL I.

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INTRODUCTION.



WHO is this, Mrs. J. Jenner? is a question that naturally arises on reading the title page of Melmoth House.

Young in literary fame, I might wish to appear before my readers in the prepossessing form of blooming eighteen, but truth obliges me to confess I have long passed that period of life, when youth lends a charm to our actions, and marks with approbation, many of our follies. To shed tears on so lamentable a change, would not avail, or recal the years that are past; and besides, weeping never was a favorite amusement with me.

I was early taught, that tears did

not become the cast of my countenance; and though I might smile, I was cautioned against laughing, as it would distort my features, and soon produce fan corners to my eyes. To all these sage admonitions, I paid due attention, 'till I was apprised of the age of emancipation, by observing few seemed to care whether I laughed or cried. In this happy freedom for exercising my muscles, as suits my humour or my feelings, without danger of wounding the sensibility, or exciting the curiosity of my companions (which consists, my readers will anticipate, of two cats and a pug dog) I have not only given vent to both in the following story, but have the temerity to exhibit them before the Public. Soliciting the favorable reception of a work from one not likely to trespass again on their indulgence.

MELMOTH HOUSE.

LETTER I.

MISS MELVILLE TO MISS ASHBOURNE.

January 6, 1812.

My dear Maria,

THIS moment is the first, in which I have been able to write to you since my return to Melmoth House, where I arrived in safety the evening before last; and had the pleasure of finding my dear benefactress much better, than from Lady Mitford's alarming letter I had reason to expect. Mrs. Melmoth's anxiety to see me induced her to come into the saloon to receive me. Dear kind friend! how must she have been surprised to find me accompanied by a total stranger!

Not to keep you longer in suspence, I will proceed to relate an incident, which vexed, and distressed me at the time more than any occurrence so ridiculous ought to have occasioned any one, who so lately had the advantage of your dear father's conversation and instruction.

I was collecting the fragments of a toy, and putting them into my work bag, when Lucy, in a low voice, said, "Dear Madam! how that gentleman is staring at you!" I looked up, and found myself the object of the most scrutinizing observation, which was highly disagreeable to me. My countenance, I believe, indicated the pain, such attention from a stranger occasioned.

As he made me a bow of respect, while he checked his horse, I concluded he had discovered his mistake; intended to convey an apology in the obeisance; and was gone.

As we entered the second gate of the park I desired Thomas to go forward, and announce my arrival.

Scarcely was he out of sight, when the carriage was suddenly stopped by the gentleman's servant, who instantly opened the door, vociferating, "Oh! my dear master will die! he will die! for pity's sake, dear lady, let my master get into the carriage!" Before I could make a reply, *in* the dying gentleman came, with considerable alertness for one so very ill; this too, notwithstanding I warmly objected, and Lucy opposed his entrance with all her strength.

He seated himself, very composedly, between us. I entreated him, even with tears, to leave the carriage, or suffer me to quit it. In vain were all my expostulations. He had so contrived as to prevent me from moving; though I made several attempts to open the door, intending to jump out.

His servant too continued so very loud in his lamentations on account of his master's illness, close to the ear of the postillion, that I could not make him hear me, though I repeatedly called to him to stop, and not suffer

the intrusion of this insolent stranger; whose behaviour both alarmed, and provoked me. To all my remonstrances he answered by thanking me for my indulgence; as without my assistance it would have been impossible for him to have pursued his journey.

In fact, his replies to the various arguments, which I used in order to prevail with him to quit the carriage, were so inapplicable, that I concluded he must be deaf. He frequently requested me not to make any apologies; assuring me he was not in the least incommoded;—"if *you* are, madam, I dare say the young woman would be happy to walk, to accommodate you."—"Indeed, sir," cried Lucy, "I shall not leave you with my young lady. You may be a highwayman, and want to rob her, for what I know."—"You are right, child, but your lady robbed me first."—"Robbed you, sir!" (exclaimed Lucy in astonishment), "never! I am very sure; and I wonder you are not ashamed to tell such falsities by your betters."—

"Well, my dear," said this tormentor, "as walking is more agreeable to you than riding, I will let you out immediately." And making an effort to open the door, he called to the postillion to stop.

With terror unspeakable, I involuntary seized his arm, to deter him from his purpose.—"Sweet creature!" said he (taking my hand) "I don't mean to offend." I hastily withdrew it.—"Insolent man!" I cried, "your behaviour distresses me beyond expression." John now drove on much faster than he had done since the sick gentleman (as he called himself) entered the carriage.

By my unsuccessful attempts to get rid of my companion I became greatly agitated, so that several times I felt as if I were fainting. Notwithstanding my evident distress, this unaccountable character persisted in keeping the seat, of which he had forcibly taken possession. And, to carry on the deception, he affected to have a violent shaking fit, of which I took no notice, though it

added to my vexation. But it succeeded so well with poor Lucy, that she was now alarmed on a different account. She thought *in good downright earnest*, as she expressed herself, that he was going to die.

My feelings were too much alive to my own situation, to pay any attention to this impudent imposter; and I could only think of the moment when I should be released by the stopping of the carriage at my kind friend's door. I summoned up all my resolution, as we drew near the house; and, the instant the door was opened, made my escape into the arms of my revered benefactress.

I had scarcely time to express the pleasure I felt at finding her so much better than my fears for her health led me to expect; and was beginning to inform her about my strange companion, when our attention was suddenly called to the gentleman, who had fallen into a fit. His face distorted, and his arms thrown wildly round, deterred the servants from coming near him. I

own, I was a little startled myself; but my doubts continued only for a few moments.

The servant, as before, cried as loud as he was able—"Oh! my poor master will die; nobody will help him! he must die! he must die!" At the same time running about like one out of his senses.

I believe poor master was troubled to restrain his risibility, which I observed he with some difficulty kept under.

Mrs. Melmoth was extremely alarmed at his horrid appearance, and sent for Mrs. Caulfield, whom you well know as our venerable housekeeper, to administer some relief from her medicine chest to the poor sufferer, 'till Mr. White, our apothecary, who also was sent for, could arrive.

To see the humanity of Mrs. Melmoth so imposed upon was most mortifying to me; nor could I prevent it; though I repeatedly entreated her not to be so uneasy.—"I had great reason to sus-

pect the object of her compassion was an imposter." She would not listen to me. The apparent sufferings of a fellow creature rendered her deaf to my representations, and almost displeased with me for my want of humanity. I remained therefore a silent spectator, 'till the gentleman thought proper to recover, which he did before the arrival of Mr. White.

He addressed himself to Mrs. Melmoth,—expressed great concern for the trouble he had unfortunately occasioned;—hoped she would allow him to pay his respects to her whilst he continued in her neighbourhood;—That his name was Brensly; second son of Lord Glenmore; that he was going to Sir James Mitford's, an old friend of his father, when being taken suddenly ill, his servant was alarmed; and, under the impression that he would die, if left with him on the road, and distant from any house, was induced by his fears to stop a carriage, and place him in it, incapable as he

was of any opposition, and indeed scarcely conscious of the proceeding; he remained therefore very much to the annoyance of that lady, whose pardon he must request his friend Sir James Mitford to intercede for.

I really did not know which to admire most, Mr. Brensly's effrontery, or my forbearance. When he pleaded his unwilling, and almost unconscious entrance into the carriage, he looked at me, and hesitated. I suppose my countenance gave a contradiction to his assertions. Mrs. Melmoth replied she should always be happy to see Sir James Mitford's friends; and insisted on his having the carriage, which he accepted, and I concluded we should never see him here again.

As soon as our troublesome visitor was gone, Mrs. Melmoth made most kind enquiries after my dear Maria, and her exemplary father. Being satisfied by my answers, she returned to the illness of Mr. Brensly, by saying "my dear Emily, I never knew you

guilty of such incivility; indeed, I may add, inhumanity as you shewed towards that unfortunate stranger, who has just left us. What could be your reason, my dear, for a conduct so very unusual in you!"—"My dear madam, I can assure you it was quite unnecessary. I have many reasons for thinking him an imposter; nor do I believe he is a son of Lord Glenmore, or known to Sir James Mitford." I then related all the circumstances of his intrusion into the carriage, and pretended deafness, &c. at which she expressed much astonishment; and we agreed, if he is not an imposter, he must be deranged.

Lucy told me, while assisting me to undress, that she thought John, our postillion, and Mr Brensly's servant were old acquaintance, as she saw them shake hands upon his having left his master in the carriage with us.

I know not what construction to put upon an incident so very strange. Do tell me, dear Maria, what your good father thinks of this man, and if he

supposes any impropriety of conduct in me could invite such insolence. For, surely, no man, without some motive, could persevere in such an outrage on all good manners. The more I think of this affair, the more am I bewildered. If he is not deranged, the insult to me is really unpardonable; as it might have deprived me of the good opinion of my best friend, had not her confidence in me been above the arts of my enemies, of whom I must mark this Brensly as one of the most dangerous.

I, even now, shudder when I reflect on the mischiefs this incident was calculated to produce. Independent of the protection of Mrs. Melmoth, of which it might have deprived me, the loss of her good opinion and affection would have made me the most wretched of human beings; and how could I have been otherwise than miserable had I offended so good, so kind a friend; although I knew I had done

no act to weaken that confidence, which Mrs. Melmoth has ever reposed in me.

This additional proof of my dear friend's affection makes me still more anxious to deserve it. Alas! I never can repay a thousandth part of the obligations, which I owe her.—Deprived of my parents at an early age, Mrs. Melmoth has, with the utmost care and affection, supplied their place. Oh! how has she indulged every wayward wish her orphan girl could form! My heart overflows with gratitude whenever I reflect upon the many instances of kindness, I am perpetually receiving from her hand. When writing or speaking on this subject, I know not how to quit a theme, that fills my soul with delight, and my eyes with tears.

I will not tire you, my dear Maria, with the affectionate effusions of a grateful heart; but hasten to inform you, that after this immense long letter you must not expect another for several days.

This morning some of our good neighbours called to congratulate Mrs.

Melmoth on her recovery, and also on my return. To-morrow, if Mrs. Melmoth is well enough, we are to make our first visit to Mrs. Newland, and her daughters, who are come to reside at Reading.

We have a considerable addition to our pensioners. By the failure of a respectable tradesman two industrious families have lost their little savings, and could no longer support their aged parents. Mrs. Melmoth has kindly offered them an asylum in the alms house, and I shall be engaged in making arrangements for their comfort and accommodation.

I am grieved to observe my dear Mrs. Melmoth's frame is visibly shaken by her late illness, which Mr. White informs me was a fit of apoplexy. I wish our good Dr. Syms was returned. I have great confidence in his skill; and he has been many years accustomed to Mrs. Melmoth's constitution. Adieu, my beloved friend, Mrs.

Melmoth unites in affectionate regards to you and your dear father.

My good Evans I hope is better; her loss I most sensibly felt.



LETTER II.

HON. GEORGE BRENSLY TO CLEVELAND HOWARD.

Mitford Lodge, Jan. 7, 1812.

WISH me joy, Howard, I have at last found that lovely girl, with whose person I was so enchanted at Bath. True, I had scarcely more than a transitory glance; but the uncommon elegance of her figure, together with the most beautiful face I ever saw, made me wild to find out, who this lovely creature was.

The difficulty of obtaining any intelligence, to be depended upon, had the usual effect upon my nerves; that of exciting my curiosity the more distant I found it from being gratified. Though

all agreed that her name was Melville, some told me she was the daughter of a country curate, living in a dependant state with a lady, who was a maniac. The people of the house informed me she was a ward of Mr. Ashbourne a clergyman. I enquired no farther, well knowing little good was to be expected from the hand of a parson by me. I never saw her after this time, though I visited every place of public amusement, in the hope of meeting her. I left Bath without another view of this enchantress.

The sudden flame had nearly died away, when, the evening before last, I overtook a carriage with a lady and her servant in it. The lady was very earnestly looking at something in her hand. I thought it must be my Bath angel; nor was it long before I was convinced it was no other than the very she, after whom I had made such useless enquires.

I could scarcely command myself, from excess of joy; and I involuntarily

exclaimed, "What a lucky dog am I!" I soon discovered she was devilish proud, for she would hardly condescend t notice the respectful bow I made her. I retreated for a few minutes, though still following the carriage, puzzling my brains for some expedient to introduce myself; as I argued, that if I lost this opportunity I might never have another.

Accidents sometimes befriends us, but I was totally deserted by that jilt Fortune. Not a horse would have the kindness to break his knees; nor a friendly wheel quit its nave, that I might have the felicity of saving this lovely creature from impending danger.

As no harm would approach my charmer, it occurred to me that I might derive some advantages by being a little in harm's way myself;—or, what would be still better, pretending to be so.

The carriage now entered a noble park. I followed; and soon had the

satisfaction of hearing an order given to the footman to go forward, in the most harmonious voice you ever heard. I waited till he was out of sight. I then gave James his cue, who, to give him his meed of praise, is an apt scholar enough. I became suddenly ill;—nothing less than dying; and must have a conveyance to take me to some house for assistance.

James stopped the carriage, and boldly opened the door; and during the surprise of the travellers, *in* I went.

Entreaties from the lady, and violent opposition from slip-slop, did not prevent me from seating myself between them.

James performed his part to admiration, by keeping up such a confounded noise as to prevent the postillion from hearing what passed within the carriage. Gold!—all powerful gold, will open the miser's heart, and seal the covetous man's lips. Here it closed both the eyes, and ears, of the mercenary wretch of a driver.

Mine was no easy task to perform, I assure you. I dared not look at my beautiful companion. Her distress was expressed in terms so touching, that half inclined me to abandon my scheme, and take to flight. But then I reflected that my object would be defeated; and she would be convinced my illness was all pretence. By the bye, I believe she has no doubt, or very little, on that head: I was therefore obliged to imitate the postillion;---turn a deaf ear to all I did not like to understand.

Miss Melville, for it was she, often exclaimed, "What will Mrs. Melmoth say! what will she think of me!" By which I concluded she was going to that lady's house; and that we were in Melmoth Park. I, provokingly enough I own, begged her not to be alarmed on my account.---"I should soon be better; had quite sufficient room; and was greatly obliged to her for her attention."---Though I knew very well she wished me at the devil.

We drew near the house, and I

thought it incumbent on me to have a good shaking fit, or two. No compassion could I excite in my lovely companion. The maid indeed was sufficiently frightened, and observed I shook just as her father's grey mare did before she died. "Ah!" I replied, "she was my grandmother." "Mercy on me!" exclaimed the girl, "what a thumper! but you are just like her; for she was the obstinatest beast that ever lived; and father never could prevent her from breaking through bars and hedges." This wise remark on the similitude between me and father's grey mare brought us to the entrance of Melmoth House, the door of which being already opened, Mrs. Abigail soon unfastened that of the carriage; and, before the footman could put the step down, out jumped both my prisoners, as in truth I may call them.

Before they could give much account of my worship, I tottered into the saloon; and, with the assistance of my punchinello James, soon collected the

whole household about me; and was confoundedly near being poisoned by their kindness.

An old figure in the shape of a housekeeper undertook my cure, and administered one of her d——d nostrums, that had so fine an effect, as to keep my mouth open like an oyster at the ebbing of the tide. I believe she thought she had given me my pasport to old Davy; but being too great an adept in the art of pharmacy not to have a variety of rival drugs, some one of which might undo the mischief of its predecessor, she again had recourse to her store, and came hobbling, with her stick in one hand, and a small vial in the other, the contents of which she very adroitly popped into my mouth, while I was gasping for breath. This had an effect so contrary as to make me bring my teeth together with such a jerk, that a locked jaw threatened to be the consequence of this last potion; and I thought, if I had a mind to save my life, it was time to recover: parti-

cularly as the apothecary had been sent for, of whom they were in momentary expectation; and he might have made such discoveries too as I was not inclined to await in the presence of my bright eyed infidel. With all due caution therefore I thought fit to recover, but I thanked Mrs. Melmoth for her hospitality, and hoped she would allow me to call again before I left Berkshire. After a little farther explanation, I was proceeding to make some very fine speeches, but a look from Miss Melville made my words die away upon my tongue; and gave me such a—a—I cannot describe how I felt; but I really believe I blushed.

This said giving the lye by a glance is, in my opinion, equally deserving chastisement as if delivered in the vulgar tongue. But how am I to resent such an insult? She was the aggressor, that I can prove. She shall apologize, and ask my pardon.—I think I shall not be very obdurate.

But to go on;—Mrs. Melmoth very

civilly replied, she should be happy to see any friend of Sir James Mitford's at Melmoth House.

The good lady insisted on my having the carriage, and would by no means allow me to go alone. I began to tremble for fear I should have the confounded housekeeper for my companion. From that misery I was however saved by one of her servants riding my horse, and leading the other; James going in the carriage with me.

Scarcely had we began to move, when I had reason to think I had carried the jest too far, and really suspected I was poisoned by the devilish nostrum the old witch had so neatly dabbed into my mouth. Sometimes I was puffed up like a toad. Then pinched together like a wasp, whose slender shape tempts the scissars of the unfeeling girl to sever.

This delightful vibration upon my corporeal frame continued till we got to Sir James Mitford's. I had no occasion to feign illness here; for I was

so seriously unwell, that I requested to retire early; and was compelled, in sober sadness, to have recourse to the neighbouring Æsculapius. With his assistance I arose the next morning quite recovered.

Sir James is a very old friend of my father. Their intimacy was renewed by their meeting at Brighton early in the summer; and Lord Glenmore promised to spend two months in the following winter with the friend of his youth. But having an attack of the gout, which threatened to confine him to the house for some time, his Lordship sent me as his deputy; and I mounted my horse very quietly. But my evil genius, ever at my elbow, was at his old pranks, when my Bath angel crossed my path; and, as I have informed you, I could not resist the impulse of the moment.

Mine host and hostess are quite an old fashioned couple, and still retain a sufficient quantity of affection for each other to persuade one, that

it is possible to be happy in the marriage state, though the bonds may have lasted five and twenty years. Sir James is as formal as bones without flesh can make him. He never bends;—but moves en masse. Lady Mitford is still handsome;—has delicate health;—is pleasant; and as agreeable as a woman turned of fifty generally is to a young man of twenty five.

Notwithstanding we are in the month of January, the country is very pleasant; and I have been with my host to see some alterations, misnamed improvements, which he has been making upon an estate that is but small. In truth, the Melmoth domains seem to extend, and embrace the whole on this side Reading; and the house is seen from every opening. Though the grounds have more the appearance of an immense wood, than a gentleman's park.

If Sir Charles Belmont is a fellow of dash, here is plenty of ammunition

for his campaigns. I think you are connected or acquainted with him. Adieu. I have written you a volume instead of a letter.

LETTER III.

MISS ASHBOURNE TO MISS MELVILLE.

Wells, Jan. 11, 1812.

LET me tell you, my dear Emily, you are a most unreasonable, unconscionable girl, to expect a long letter from me; you shall have one as long as my piano-forte, when I meet with such an adventure as yours. Oh! what a delightful incident! I envy you more than I can express; and have not been myself since I read your description of an event, that would have made me the happiest creature in the universe.

Never tell me what the old lady might think, She is only an old maid; and those animals have no bu-

siness to think of handsome young men. Only cats, dogs, and apes, ought to have a place in their lucubrations.

You are very provoking; for not one word do you say whether this daring knight is handsome, or ugly; black, or white.—I am sure he is handsome, and I hope not short. I hate a short man.—Eyes! ah! what colour are his eyes? I cannot exactly fix upon what I like best. Brilliant they are no doubt.—A glow of health upon his complexion, heightened too by the reflection of his regimentals.

What does my good father say, you ask.—Extols you: scolds me. O! conscience, conscience! you will force me to speak the truth, although rather inclined to step a little, very little on one side.

My dear dad says, you always conduct yourself with propriety; and between jest and earnest, wishes he could extend the observation to his own daughter. I tell him I have the

advantage over you: I shall improve by the operation of time; you, who are so good, so very amiable, will unavoidably become the worse. It is a sage observation, that nothing is stationary. You, having arrived at the zenith of perfection, must therefore soon begin your retrograde motion, and we have a chance to meet on a parallel.

I shall be anxious to hear from you. O! I had almost forgotten to tell you that the name of Brensly was among the subscribers at Alfern's Library at Bath. My father recollects that circumstance, as he twice enquired for books, that were engaged by a Mr. Brensly. Lord Glenmore was a fellow student of my father.

I think the Wells agree better with my dear father than Bath. I very much regret you could not stay longer with us; as you seemed to enjoy the rambles here better than the bustle of that place. I know, my dear Emily, you thought we had too many visitors;

and that love's artillery was making a serious attack upon my heart. No impression, believe me! I like to be well attended. A little small talk, I acknowledge, is agreeable to me. I always sleep the better for it; have such delightful dreams, that make me fly to the glass, the moment I am out of bed, to see if I am that charming creature, I had been told I was the evening before.

Don't laugh, Emily, at my misfortunes, and I will tell you what happened to me this morning.—As I was advancing in too great haste to take a view of my sweet self, in my heedless progress I threw down a bottle of nankeen die, which was perched above me. The cork flew out, and the contents were scattered over my face and dress. I am such a figure, I dare not shew myself. I expected a lecture upon vanity; but my dear good father had some commiseration for me. I do believe he was frightened. I am told it will wear off in a few days. At pre-

sent I am a lovely Yarico. Inkle must seek me in my father's house. To no grove, or cave will I wander to hide my beauties.

Heigh ho! I never shall be distinguished in the annals of chivalry. I shall be dying 'till I hear from you. Brensly! second son of Lord Glenmore!—There he spoke truth.

I must not omit to tell you, my father requests you to accept his love, and the assurance of his approbation of your conduct. Kind remembrances to Mrs. Melmoth. Adieu.



LETTER IV.

HON. G. BRENSLY TO C. HOWARD.

Mitford Hall, Jan. 12, 1812.

JUST returned from Melmoth House, where we have been this morning. I was introduced to Mrs. Melmoth in great form by Sir James.

I cannot boast of a very gracious reception. Prejudiced no doubt the lady was by her child, as she fondly calls Miss Melville. As she was not present, I had a favorable opportunity of doing away, partly, if not wholly, the impression that young lady had given of my being an impostor. Sir James knew my father, and lady Mitford spoke of my illness after I arrived at their house, in a manner that had visibly the effect I wished ; and in consequence, I had a general invitation, which I shall avail myself of; and learn if this lovely girl is really worth the pains I took to be acquainted with her.

I might have saved her and myself some trouble. *That* I could not foresee; for, though I was aware that I was near Reading, it was possible Miss Melville might not be an acquaintance of the Mitfords. Families in the country, though near neighbours, and direfully in want of society, are not always on visiting terms.

Miss Melville did not return 'till just as we were taking leave of Mrs. Melmoth. Oh! how lovely she looked as she entered! Lady Mitford folded her in her arms, and kissed her with maternal fondness. Sir James too had the same indulgence allowed him. Confound their tantalizing greetings! I had a great mind to poke my head up between them, in the hope Emily would make a mistake; and, as she was just returned from a charitable excursion, I might have expected the small donation of a kiss, to be bestowed upon one, who I am sure would not be ungrateful for her favors,

She is very saucy, I assure you; and made me feel that same odd sensation I complained of before; and which, I am convinced, was a—blush—I now saw it, as I happened to stand opposite a large pier glass. I did not know myself 'till I saw, and felt the hand of Sir James on my shoulder. This fault she must correct, or I shall be thrown out. I never was so deep

in Cupid's trammels as I am at this instant. And how should it be otherwise? Struck at first by the beauty of her person, I cannot wander into a cottage, but I hear every comfort they enjoy is given them by Mrs. Melmoth; though all owing to the goodness of that dear young lady Miss Emily, who frequently visits the poor, to see what they need; or Mrs. Melmoth would never hear of their distress.

The same is the perpetual theme in the house where I am; with the addition of those rare accomplishments, that I can believe she possesses, but which I question whether Sir James has much taste for.

Of what materials do they think I am made? For ever are they striking the cords of love's fiddle-strings 'till my heart thumps against its confines, like the clapper of great Tom of Lincoln. I positively write no more 'till I hear from you; so adieu.

LETTER V.

C. HOWARD, ESQ. TO HON. G. BRENSLY.

George St. Hanover Square.
Jan. 16, 1812.

My dear Brensly,

IN daily expectation of hearing you have had your deserts in some friendly horse-pond, or been knocked on the head with a good oaken cudgel, I have ordered my old black coat to be brushed, and well aired, as I do not intend to honour your exit with a new one. And having been in the habit for some years of calling you friend, I should with more pleasure hear you had been thus thumped, or washed out of the world, than of your being united to that artful girl Emily Melville.

She has played so deep a game, that poor Belmont does not expect a shilling from Mrs. Melmoth, though

he is her own nephew, and heir at law to her possessions. A family disagreement has been kept alive by this girl's father, 'till it became too violent for any friend's interference to have a happy effect. The successful machinations of that insidious Melville have been strictly adhered to by the well instructed daughter; and she now practices on the weak mind of Mrs. Melmoth those precepts she received from her father. It is well understood by Mrs. Melmoth's family and friends, that the whole of her property is to devolve to this child of indigence; for her father was only a country curate.

My information is from my brother's wife, who is sister to Sir Charles Belmont, but there is as great a difference in their manners and disposition as in their age, which is, I believe, about the same as between myself and my brother. I should like to know some particulars respecting the original cause of disagreement between the

two families; for Mrs. Howard is so violent, when she alludes to the subject, that my brother generally starts some other topic, or leaves the room.

Sir James, and Lady Mitford's commendations of Mrs. Melmoth's protegé; are easily accounted for. Their only son is as great a scamp as any about town, and keeps his father so needy, that there may be interest and convenience in being well with Mrs. Melmoth's declared heiress.

But do you, dear Brensly, steer clear of this dangerous syren. Let not her wealth tempt you, nor yet her beauty, which you so lavishly extol; and which Mrs. Howard, who has seen her, declares she has no more pretensions to, than to the distinction in society, her foolish aunt has thought proper to give her.

I say, with all these advantages, with the addition of every accomplishment, let them not induce you to accept the hand of one so truly despicable. Beware, and fly from those

arts, that lurk beneath an eye, which seems to subdue every principle of worth, I esteemed you for.

My Caroline boasts no beauty, and possesses but a moderate share of what the world calls accomplishments; but she is a jewel of great price. Her heart is the repository of every virtue, that can adorn her sex. And her happy husband, fully sensible of the treasure he possesses, can never write, nor speak of her, but with the most lively emotion, and warmest gratitude for such a blessing.

Do not then, dear Brensly, suffer your eyes to blind your judgment. Your heart is not bad, at present; but, united to an unprincipled young woman, like Miss Melville, who has so much property at command, your follies will soon become vices. Difficulties, of course, will be the consequence; and, with such a companion, no soothing kindness will meet your ear; no participation in distress must you expect.

Can you calculate on the disappointment your extravagance will cause in the breast of a woman presuming on her having enriched you with her wealth? For meanness in the acquisition of money is generally followed by insolence in the possession. Listen to my admonitions. Fly from danger; and continue the esteemed friend of

CLEVELAND HOWARD.

LETTER VI.

HON. G. BRENSLY TO C. HOWARD, ESQ.

Mitford Hall, Jan. 21, 1812.

AMEN!—You forgot, Howard, to add that at the conclusion of your letter; so I have put it to the top of mine.

"You have not a bad heart," you tell me. I thank you; I thank you kindly! Have you any more negative virtues, or qualifications to allow me?

I shall be proud to have a place on your list of worthies.

"Don't fall in love with Emily Melville," is one of your wise admonitions. Too late! too late with your warnings! I am in love! I will be in love! So no more on that subject. After all you said against this angelic woman, I would not advise you to venture your sconce within the precincts of Reading. Every creature here adores her.

You are mistaken, if you imagine Miss Melville is servile in her behaviour to Mrs. Melmoth. No! though she is respectful, she is easy; it is the freedom of a daughter, which marks her attention to Mrs. Melmoth.

I seldom let a day pass, but I spend part of it at Melmoth House. With the old lady I have secured an interest. I wish I could say I was well received by the young one.

If so vile a passion as that of hatred could be an inmate in the bosom of one so amiable, I should be the object to excite it. Dislike me she certainly

does; and takes every opportunity of shewing it without being rude. That, in her estimation, would be to degrade herself.

Her ideas, and manners, are of so dignified a cast, that however she may be offended, to reproach she would think too great a condescension.

Strange! you will tell me, that I should persevere in a pursuit, with so little prospect of success. I have made some observations that add to my store of—vanity. There is not one of the young men, who visit at Melmoth House, but I have the advantage of him in every respect. Mrs. Melmoth has made this discovery; and is it not probable that Miss Melville will become pleased with my society; particularly as I am so great a favorite of her friend? I wont despair. That is too mortifying a sensation to be encouraged by me, while there is a shadow of hope remaining.

So, I will now proceed to relate some anecdotes of the Melmoth fami-

ly, which you seem to have a little curiosity to be informed of.

Mr. Melmoth, the father of the present proprietor of Melmoth Park, was the youngest son of Lord Bampfield; and married an heiress of the name of Selwyn. Mr, Melmoth made himself so agreeable to Mr. Selwyn, that, when he died, he left the whole of his property to Mr. Melmoth, and at his disposal.

Mrs. Melmoth did not long survive her father. She left two daughters; the eldest of whom was seventeen years of age; the youngest fourteen.

Mr. Melmoth and Sir Charles Belmont had been in habits of friendship many years; and a union between young Belmont and Augusta, the eldest daughter of Mr. Melmoth, had long been in contemplation between the fathers of the young people; though it had never been mentioned to them; and they were designedly prevented from seeing each other, 'till the young

man returned from his travels, and became of age, which was about the time Augusta completed her nineteenth year.

Young Belmont, like a dutiful son, readily acquiesced in the proposed union; wisely considering that event as only the finale to an education, of which the following may be the summary. Began with A, B, C, in the nursery;—passed from thence to school;—spent a little time; and a great sum at the university;—sent abroad;—returned home;—roasted a bullock;—made all the people drunk; take a wife of papa's choice. He is then told, "I have done with you, sir!" All this young Belmont agreed to; and consented to accept the hand of Augusta Melmoth, and forty thousand pounds; for no better reason than that he might become his own master.

Mr. Melmoth, whose prejudices were strongly on the side of family, and ancestors, waved the consideration of pecuniary advantages, as well

as new made nobility, in favor of his friend Sir Charles Belmont, one of whose progenitors had fought under the banner of William the conqueror, and had borne a distinguished part in the memorable battle of Hastings.

Young Belmont, without any great assiduity, was favorably received, and won the heart of Augusta Melmoth. The delighted parents saw, with pleasure, that their long projected plan for uniting their families was happily soon to be accomplished. The writings were nearly finished, by which two thirds of Mr. Melmoth's property were to be settled on his eldest daughter, and her heirs, at his decease. The happy day was fixed, and Julia, the youngest daughter, now sixteen, was sent for from school to be her sister's bride-maid.

Young Belmont arrived at Melmoth House a few days previous to that, intended for the celebration of the intended nuptials.

The morning before the appointed

day, an express from the solicitor came to inform Mr. Melmoth that a fire had happened in his office, by which the marriage writings were destroyed. Part of the instructions only were saved from the flames.

Miss Melmoth was cruelly disappointed. Belmont, as was too evident, was far less discomposed. He had seen the lovely Julia. Mild, and gentle in her manners, her youthful innocent playfulness had made that impression upon his heart, to which he had hitherto been a stranger; and he was wretched at the thought of uniting himself to one, for whom he felt little more than indifference.

The destruction of the writings was a respite, that served to rivet his chains still closer, as he made no effort to leave Melmoth House, and had the pleasure of discovering, that he was more than agreeable to the sister of his betrothed.

His father wrote him word they should come to Melmoth Park in the

course of the following week; and hoped this little delay would be the only interruption to that happiness, he had looked forward to in the union of his dear son with the amiable daughter of his much respected friend.

This letter, which was to the bridegroom elect like a warrant for execution to the eyes of a criminal, he held in his hand at a distance too far to admit of his reading it a second time; yet he looked intently at it, as if afraid it would do him some mischief if he drew it nearer to him.

Unmindful of any observer he found a hand softly laid upon his arm, accompanied by,—"Are you ill?" in a voice of such tender accent, that thrilled through all his veins, and roused him from his torpor. Pressing the hand of Julia to his lips, he rushed out of the house in a state of mind bordering on distraction, and scarcely knowing what he did, wandered about the fields for several hours.

Having acquired a little composure,

he was returning to the house, fully resolved to keep his engagement, which he was sensible he could not break without dishonor. Miss Melmoth's conduct had given no room for complaint, or dissatisfaction. He could not then, without the utmost baseness, decline to fulfil a contract, which was entered into without the smallest objection on his part.

With the most determined resolution to keep his engagement to Miss Melmoth, and conquer his passion for Julia, did Belmont enter the garden on his return to the house. When, as he passed a small pavillion, the figure of Julia resting her head on one hand, while the other held up a handkerchief to her face, deprived poor Belmont of every good resolution, and in a moment hurried him to the feet of his adored Julia. Terrified at his impetuosity, Julia attempted to pass by him; but in vain: and a mutual affection was acknowledged before they parted, At once unhappy, and full

of honorable sentiments, no promise of continued affection was given; and Julia, young as she was, determined to avoid Belmont in future; and, for that purpose, feigned illness, that her absence from table might be the less noticed.

He felt the delicate propriety of her conduct; and endeavoured to follow her example, by assuming an appearance of cheerfulness ill according with the wretchedness of his feelings.

Miss Melmoth was sincerely attached to Belmont, and could not but be greatly shocked with the alteration, which her feelings, and her eyes, too plainly told her had taken place; though she was entirely unsuspicious of the cause.

Affairs were in this state, when Sir Charles Belmont arrived with the writings; two days after which the marriage was to be celebrated.—So the fathers had appointed; and the solicitor was desired to read the writings after dinner, on the day previous to that fixed for the marriage.

Belmont, absorbed in melancholy, listened not, nor attended to the liberality, with which Mr. Melmoth had acted by his eldest daughter; nor did he know when the solicitor had ended, 'till he was desired to add his signature to the contract.

Trembling he drew near to obey the summons, which was twice repeated before he moved.---But when he took the pen, and was going to add his name to an act, that must cut off every hope of being united to his beloved Julia, all resolution forsook him. The pen dropped from his hand, and he declared he could not comply with their wishes.

Astonishment took possession of those present, and all, except Belmont, remained immoveable. He hastily advanced, and taking the hand of Augusta, raised it to his lips.---"Pardon, oh! pardon a wretch who is not villain enough to give his hand without his heart!"

Miss Melmoth heard not all he ut-

tered. She fainted, and fell from her seat. Belmont, extremely shocked by the distress he had occasioned, attempted to raise her up; but the enraged father pushed him aside, the act being accompanied by a volley of oaths, and execrations, in the midst of which he did not forget to order Sir Charles' carriage to the door immediately.

Before this order was given, young Belmont had left the room; at a loss where to go, and only hastening to quit a house and family, he had rendered too miserable not to wish to fly from.

At that critical time he saw his beloved Julia coming out of a shrubbery near to the house. The distress within was in an instant forgotten, or but little felt; and Belmont eagerly advanced to meet her; told her his marriage with her sister never would take place; and that he was at liberty to offer himself to her.

Julia was surprised; but had not time to ask questions. Sir Charles'

carriage was driving up to the door. A thought occurred to Belmont, the execution of which would complete the business at once.—This was no less than to carry away Julia, while the family were in commotion about her sister. No time was to be lost. He pleaded hard; and the agitated and affrighted Julia gave a half consent, though the poor girl made use of every argument, which the perturbation of her young mind could suggest. Love, all conquering love prevailed; and into the carriage Belmont conveyed her, more dead than alive.

We will leave the young couple on their flight to Scotland; and another day take a peep at the inhabitants of Melmoth House.

Best regards to Mrs. C Howard.

LETTER VII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

WE are now to amuse ourselves with the scene that passed at Melmoth House, while the runaways were scampering off to the land of matrimony. We left Miss Melmoth in a fainting fit, and her father in a rage, which, as young Belmont escaped from it by leaving the room, fell with redoubled fury on Sir Charles, for bringing his rascally son to Melmoth House.

Sir Charles expressed great concern, disappointment, and surprise, at the extraordinary, and indefensible conduct of his son.—Disappointed he most assuredly was; for, having a considerable incumbrance on his paternal estate, he had, in his own mind appropriated three fourths of Miss Melmoth's marriage portion to clear it off.

In vain were all his conciliatory advances to soften the justly irritated father of the injured Augusta. His favorite child was, as he thought, dying; killed by the villain Sir Charles called son, whom without ceremony he ordered to leave the house.

Sir Charles deeply participated in the wounded feelings of his friend, and mildly obeyed his commands; expecting to find his carriage at the door prepared for travelling. What was his astonishment when neither carriage, nor coachman were to be found!

After many enquiries, a servant informed him that, on the road from Reading, he met his honor's carriage with Mr. Belmont and Miss Julia:--they were coming out of the park, and he opened one gate for them.

Sir Charles, very much distressed to be under the necessity of continuing in a house from which he had been literally turned out, impatiently waited for the return of his thoughtless son. But, when night came, and no carriage,

nor son appeared, the truth flashed upon his mind; and he was as anxious to leave Melmoth House, as the proprietor was desirous he should.

Julia was missed before morning; and her being seen with young Belmont in his father's carriage was communicated to Mr. Melmoth, who thundered out imprecations, without mercy, upon Sir Charles, his son, and Julia. Such dreadful expressions were made use of, that Sir Charles resolved to leave the house without delay, which he did, attended only by his own servant, who walked with him to Reading.

It was some time before he obtained admittance at the Inn. He went to bed immediately; and tried, without success, to gain some repose; giving orders that he should be called at an early hour.

After taking some refreshment, and writing a few friendly lines to Mr. Melmoth, for whose unhappy situation he even felt more than for his own disappointment, he threw himself into

a chaise, and proceeded for London. About three miles from Reading he met his own carriage empty. Few questions were asked. He exchanged, and continued his journey.

Sir Charles considered himself ill used by all parties; and, of course, was not well disposed to receive the first overtures, which were made on the return of his son, from whom he did not hear for nearly a month after their elopement.

As young Belmont's cash disappeared, it became necessary to find ways and means to replenish his exhausted coffers. Shame, and not a want of affection, had hitherto deterred him from writing to his father; but as the necessities of the young couple became urgent, a letter to Sir Charles was written, and signed by both.

The first emotion was joy to hear again of a beloved son. The next was the recollection of the dishonorable part that son had acted by his

friend. No notice therefore was taken of that letter, But the kind hearted father did not use any efforts to stifle the language of nature; and, upon enquiry, finding the poor devils had little more than love to feast on, he went himself, and brought them to his house.

The next thing to be done was to soften Mr. Melmoth into a reconciliation. To effect this, Sir Charles wrote to consult with him upon the best mode of providing for the young people.

For sometime no answer arrived. At last, a few lines were written to Sir Charles, couched in the most abusive language that could be invented; telling him, he might make such provision for his son, and his wife, as suited his own inclination, or convenience,—that the health of his eldest daughter had suffered so much from the late infamous transaction, that, as a parent, he considered himself bound to make her all the recompence in his

power; and, as his only child, he had, in the disposal of his property, left her the heiress. The moiety of a sum settled on his late wife he had no power over; therefore, at his decease, it would go as that settlement directed. He concluded by desiring never to be troubled again with letters or messages from Sir Charles, or any part of his family; as in future all communication between them must for ever cease.

A violent fever reduced Miss Melmoth to a state of debility, which affected her reason. On her recovery from this unhappy condition, Mr. Melmoth was advised to take his daughter to the south of France. Anxious to have his daughter restored to health, he did not hesitate, but, leaving all his own comforts, went with Miss Melmoth to the continent; where they remained travelling from place to place for three years.

From France they passed into Italy, in the hope of removing those fits of melancholy, with which Augusta was

affected. High spirited, and haughty, her temper could not brook the insult; independent of the pangs of unrequited love, which there are few but must have deeply felt.

Having, in some degree, recovered her spirits, Mr. Melmoth was anxious to return with her to England, after an absence of seven years;

Three years after his return he died. Most rigidly did he adhere to every bitter interdiction against his offending child, who had, at various times, written to entreat forgiveness both from her father, and her sister.

No answer was ever returned; but on his death all her letters, which had not even ever been opened, were sent back in an envelope; directed to her in her father's own hand writing.

The implacable temper of Mr. Melmoth suffered no abatement of its violence from time; or the still more persuasive voice of nature. And, on his death bed, all the dreadful invectives against Julia, and her husband,

pronounced in the first emotions of his wrath, he never departed from; and he left his eldest daughter heiress to the whole of his possessions. Mrs. Belmont was not even named in her father's will. She came in for the moiety of her mother's settlement, which was fifteen thousand pounds.— A small sum considering the large property, both real, and personal, Mr. Melmoth received with her mother.

Augusta was the very counterpart of her father both in person, and temper. Friendly to a degree bordering on enthusiasm; but, if once used ill, the utmost powers of persuasion could not have prevailed upon either to forgive. Various friends interceded, anxiously labouring to effect a reconciliation; as Mrs. Belmont was evidently going into a decline.

Sir Charles lived but a few months after Mr. Melmoth.

Lady Belmont, touched to the quick by the obduracy of her father, was the more eager to recover the affections

of her sister; and determined to make one more effort by writing a most affecting letter to Miss Melmoth. Sir William also, considering himself the aggressor, wrote to her in the most conciliatory terms; entreating her to return to a state of friendship with her sister, though she might regard him as unworthy of any place in her affection. To Lady Belmont she only replied in a few lines, requesting that she would not give herself the trouble to write again; and repeating that the sisterly ties had been dissolved by herself, and it remained only that they should continue strangers to each other. And to prevent any expectations from her, of a pecuniary nature, she took that opportunity to inform her, that she should follow the example of her excellent father, and leave her property to those, she considered most worthy her esteem.

Lady Belmont had lost several children between the birth of the eldest, which was a girl, and the very

same who is your brother's wife; and a son, who is the present baronet; between whom there are fifteen years difference in their age.

The anecdotes of your sister in law's infantine exploits, were those of a vulgar ill tempered girl; imperious and haughty to the servants, and dependents; rude to her superiors, and equals. Her amiable mother could make no impression either by precept, or example; and died when her son had only completed his third year.

Sir William was inconsolable for the loss of a wife, whom he tenderly loved. He neglected his person; and became so extremely indolent, that his affairs, which were in an indifferent state before, grew worse; and his children were permitted to do as they pleased.

A friend of Lady Belmont kindly requested Sir William to allow Miss Belmont to accompany her to Bristol; where your Brother saw, and fell in love with her. No objection was offer-

ed on the part of Sir William; and the marriage took place before any discoveries of ill temper were made by the lover. Her manners were at that time those of a complete vulgar hoyden. This passed upon Mr. Howard for the vivacity of a playful girl, pronounced to be handsome at that period of life when few girls are thought to be ugly.

I am not acquainted with your brother; but I believe his own manners were not such as were likely to improve a wife, whose age afforded opportunities for important changes.

Belmont was the very reverse of his sister. Sir William was with difficulty prevailed with to part with him, that he might begin his education. At the age of fourteen he lost his father, who, by his will, appointed Sir Everard Mellish, and Mr. Howard his guardians.

The state in which they found the affairs of Sir William, induced Sir Everard to make application to Mrs.

Melmoth, that she would extricate her nephew from the difficulties he must unavoidably experience on coming of age. But no arguments in favor of the unoffending youth had the smallest effect. Mrs. Melmoth had once been in company with Mrs. Howard, whose extreme rudeness obliged her to leave the room, though not before her own name, accompanied by a loud laugh, reached her ear.

I have now done with the Belmonts, and shall in my next letter introduce you to Mr. Melville and his detestable daughter, as you please to call the most delightful woman in England.

Remember me most kindly to your dear Caroline.

LETTER VIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

My dear Howard,

TO introduce you properly to the Melvilles, I must just take the

liberty of breaking a bone or two;—at least so did Miss Melmoth by the overturning of her carriage in the village of Liphook in Hampshire. Mr. Melville saw the accident; and, in extricating Miss Melmoth from farther mischief, was considerably injured himself by the plunging of one of the horses.

Miss Melmoth requested that she might be taken to a private house. Mrs. Melville being informed of the accident, and that her husband was hurt, hastened to give her assistance, followed by little Emily, then about four years of age; who, seeing that Miss Melmoth was in great pain, kissed her cheek, and begged her not to cry, for her mama would love her;—she loved every body that was hurt. Mr. Melville kindly offered a part of his house, which was gladly accepted.

Mr. Melville was only a curate, though he was allowed to live in the vicarage, which, happening to be larger than vicarage houses usually are,

Miss Melmoth enjoyed comfortable accommodations for herself, and three servants.

For five months she continued an inhabitant of the vicarage; her spirits recovering faster than her fractured limb. Emily was her constant companion; and, when she left Liphook, she requested to take her with her, which was not refused; and she became so great a favorite, that her parents seldom had her with them.

Mr. Melville having heard, and indeed observed, something of those fits of melancholy, which occasionally afflicted Miss Melmoth, and which his dear little girl's affectionate attention had conduced so greatly to remove, was unwilling to give pain by taking Emily from her.

The death of Mrs. Melville, three years after Miss Melmoth's accident, increased his anxiety to have his daughter with him. But he forbore to urge it, Emily having become as much attached to Miss Melmoth, as she had been to her own mother.

Mr. Melville's health was now declining; and a change of air being recommended, he gave up his curacy, and accepted the invitation of Miss Melmoth to live with her and his daughter, whose education at this time would be greatly promoted by his superintendance.

In this situation Mr. Melville's happiness had but one abatement. He had a son, of whom for many years he had received no information. The uneasiness, his misconduct had occasioned the worthy father, did not diminish the anxiety to learn his fate. He died without receiving any satisfaction to his enquiries; but not before he saw his lovely daughter approach to womanhood, rich in every gift nature or acquirements could contribute; and he breathed his last under the hospitable roof of Melmoth House, with that general regret, which is felt when each seems to have lost a friend at once the most useful, the most worthy, and the most amiable.

The poor Emily deeply lamented the death of her excellent father; but the tender affection of Mrs. Melmoth (as we must now call her) supplied the loss of parents; and Miss Melville is now received in society as her adopted child,—heiress to her splendid property.

I expect you to make me your very best bow for this little history, collected at different times from Sir James and Lady Mitford;-- frequently from both together; for having lived so many years "Bone of my bone," they tune up, at the same time, in such perfect harmony, that I find it difficult to direct my attention, so as not to lose between them, the substance of the subject under discussion. Therefore, if there are any breaks, you must patch them up, with what you may collect from Mrs. Howard and Sir Charles, who, as you tell me, is returned.

Pray let me know in what way he has been employed, during so many years of absence from his own country.

I hope he has not been acting like many of our young men, who glean the trash of other countries to add to the follies of their own.

LETTER IX.

C. HOWARD, ESQ. TO HON. G. BRENSLY.

George Street, Jan. 26, 1812.

Dear Brensly,

I AM very much gratified by the little history contained in your three last letters. How you were able to collect, connect, and arrange all the circumstances, you have related, is a matter of no small astonishment to me. Miss Melmoth's disappointment, and consequent suffering, I can most truly feel for. Yet I know not how to justify her relentless spirit to her sister, and still less to her unoffending nephew.

A worthier fellow than Belmont does not exist; and his residence

abroad does credit to his integrity, and honor.

His father's debts, which he has paid, were very considerable: and he has also nearly cleared off the incumbrance, which his grandfather left upon the estate at Sunny Vale. To effect this under the age of thirty, may subject Sir Charles to the charge of parsimony from such an extravagant fellow as yourself. I assure you that he is far otherwise. His time has been chiefly passed in those countries, which have suffered most from the ravages of war; and many distressed families has he relieved; many has he saved from perishing; and he has left his name indelibly engraven on the grateful heart,—the best tablet benevolent actions can be recorded upon.

Accident introduced him to our ambassador at the court of St. Petersburgh. He proved of great service in the business then negociating, and received in return a settled appointment with a handsome salary.

The emperor also made him several valuable presents. Our ambassador being recalled, Sir Charles has returned with him; but I have no doubt of his being employed again, if he wishes it.

My wife pronounces that he is very handsome; and, when I observe that his complexion is more dark than when he left England, she answers that it is more manly.

You have by no means convinced me that Mr. aud Miss Melville did not contribute to the fostering the resentment and animosity of Mrs. Melmoth. And I think, Brensly, if you only reflect a little on the account you have written respecting Miss Melville's first going home with Miss Melmoth;—her separation from her parents;—and finally her father going to live at Melmoth House, you must evidently perceive the plan in embryo, and now witness its maturity; and I trust you will not be so weak as to be duped by that artful girl, and fairly caught in the matrimonial noose.

That my prejudice may have arisen from Mrs. Howard, I will not deny. It is true her violence, and even occasional vulgarity, are insufferable. And her son Horace is the strangest compound of boor, and coxcomb, ever created.

My brother has yielded so entirely to that imperious woman, that, on my life! he has no more authority in his own house, than you, or I, have at St. James' Palace. If he presume to give an order, the servant as naturally repeats it to his mistress, before he obeys, as if he dared not execute any command of his master, 'till approved of by the lady. My brother is sixteen years older than Mrs. Howard; but by the arrangement of their domestic concerns any one would suppose he was of the age of old Parr, and had outlived his faculties. I seldom go there, though we live in the same street.

I hope that you may visit London soon, when I will introduce you to Sir Charles.

My dear Caroline is unwell; otherwise I should not have indulged you with so long a letter.—Happily she is in a delightful sleep; and I am writing by her side.—She awakes; and her husband quits his pen to converse with the beloved of his heart.

May you, dear Brensly, find on the sixth anniversary of your wedding day an attachment as strong, and interest as great, as that which my dear Caroline excites in the heart of your faithful and affectionate friend

CLEVELAND HOWARD.

LETTER X.

MISS MELVILLE TO MISS ASHBOURNE.

Melmoth House, February 8, 1812.

TELL me, my dear Maria, what am I to do with this strange being Brensly. Perpetually is he in my way. If I look to the left, or the right, there he is at my elbow. I cannot

ride or walk, but he meets, or overtakes me.—He absented himself for two or three days, and I was in hope he had left Berkshire; but for the last ten days he has been constantly here. The snow, that fell the day before yesterday, I flattered myself would have prevented his coming, instead of which, he was here soon after breakfast. So tedious a day I never passed!

Mrs. Melmoth is pleased with his company; and wishes to persuade me into a favorable opinion of him. He takes infinite pains to recommend himself to her:—studies her temper; consults her humour; and plays a variety of games, and tricks, to amuse her. When she is tired of one, he thinks of another; and, at intervals, continues to torment me with the most extravagant avowals of love.—Mrs. Melmoth laughs.—I am vexed.—He then affects penitence, and pretends to be wretched, 'till he has obtained my pardon. I often endeavour to make my eseape, but generally without success.

He had the effrontery yesterday to say to Mrs. Melmoth, if she would only avow her approbation of his addresses, he was quite sure I would not refuse him my hand. Almost petrified with astonishment, I insisted on his removing any impression his words might have communicated to the mind of Mrs. Melmoth; and assured him that if he indulged in such liberty of language respecting me, he would compel me to absent myself from the society of my friend, during his continuance in the neighbourhood. Finding I was serious, he was so to; and expressed so much contrition that dear Mrs. Melmoth became his advocate.

I have most earnestly requested her not to encourage his troublesome attentions. To meet her wishes I would make great sacrifices; but I should be very miserable, if I thought my future happiness were to depend upon so capricious a being as Mr. Brensly.

In continuation.

I was obliged to leave my letter unfinished yesterday to receive some unexpected visitors; and must return to a subject sadly vexatious to me.

I cannot account for Mr. Brensly's conduct without supposing, in part at least, it is owing to derangement. For, surely, no man in his senses would, after seeing his buffoonery had annoyed me yesterday, renew it again, as he did this day after dinner, to which he had no hesitation to invite himself. And, no sooner were the servants withdrawn, than he began as usual his attack upon me.

I was so vexed, I told him it could be no amusement to Mrs. Melmoth to hear the same absurdities repeated; and requested he would change the subject.—"You are perfectly right," he replied; "and Mrs. Melmoth shall

hear how prettily we shall behave ourselves

> After the happy knot is tied,
> And Emily Melville is my bride."

These two ridiculous lines he sang; and then began a kind of dialogue between himself and me, as his wife; making use of such fond, and tender expressions, that, though I felt myself compelled to laugh, I quitted the room, and did not return 'till I was assured he was gone.

I am so greatly annoyed by his visits here, that I very much dread his acquaintance in town; and I know Mrs. Melmoth has said (though as slightly as possible) she should be happy to see him in Portman Square.

It is not for me to say—" do not give admission to Mr. Brensly:" but I wish most ardently that he had not been one of those, to whom invitations are extended. My only chance now is in the probability of his finding some other object for his attentions; and I am willing to place considerable reliance on the unsteadiness of his character.

It is a matter of astonishment to me that he should continue in the country at this dreary season of the year. As he is no sportsman, and has very few acquaintance in this neighbourhood, his amusement would be small if he did not take a pleasure in tormenting me.

He tells me he wishes I would hate him, as he should then have some hope of a revolution in his favor. The first he certainly takes the right way to secure. The latter he never can obtain.

We shall not be in town 'till March, being later this year on account of Mrs. Melmoth's illness, and you know it is a custom with Mrs. Melmoth not to leave the country, 'till she has provided for the comfort of all the poor near her. Warm clothing too is distributed during the most rigorous season of the year. We then go to town for a few months.

I am always sorry to leave the country; and wish Mrs. Melmoth would

give up her house in town, which she at first was induced to take, that I might have the advantage of good masters, while she herself, and my dear father superintended my education. If all this trouble, and expense, contributed to improve, and make me the companion, she wished to have constantly with her, what right has the world to condemn her liberality?

I cannot escape the discovery that many, with whom we mix, view me in the odious light of a sycophant, who is enjoying all the advantages of affluence; and studying how to secure them by fomenting the unhappy dissensions of a respectable family. But all intercourse had ceased, for years, before the accident, which introduced Mrs. Melmoth to my family.

All the influence, I possess over the mind of my benefactress, has, as opportunity offered, been always exerted to soften her heart in favor of such near relations: but, unhappily, with no other effect, than to induce her to

forbid me, on pain of her displeasure, ever to mention them again.

Mr. Brensly tells me Sir Charles Belmont has returned from abroad. If he should once mention him to Mrs. Melmoth, and with those encomiums, he has very prodigally uttered to me, he would soon lose her favor; and I should be freed from my tormentor.

It is an invariable maxim with me never to check, or promote the interference of friends. Though I have failed in my attempts, another may be more successful.

Thus far have I written without once naming your excellent father. Oh! never can I forget him!--His resemblance to my own dear, admirable parent, brings him always fresh to my recollection. The first time I saw the revered friend of that father, what emotions did his likeness produce in me! His person;--his manners--so similar! scarcely could I refrain from throwing my arms round his neck, and asking his blessing.

Since that memorable day, I have often enjoyed the happiness of his society, and approbation, which it is my great ambition still to deserve as truly, as I am, your affectionate friend,

EMILY MELVILLE.

LETTER XI.

HON. G. BRENSLY TO C. HOWARD.

Mitford Lodge, Feb. 13, 1812.

DO you think, Howard, I have nothing else to do with my eyes and ears but to make use of them for your gratification? Believe me, my good friend, there was a fine dashing young fellow to be obliged, who is rather more interested, (or at any rate wishes to be so) than you are.

How I could get at some of the incidents, I related to you, is, I own, rather mysterious.—Be it known to your worship, that, in one of the draw-

ers appropriated to my use, a packet of old letters were omitted to be taken out.— Their being old was no recommendation to me; and with the strictest honor I was removing them, when the string broke, and down dropped the precious scrawls, which, with great reverence to antiquity, I began carefully to pick up. Some, having been written on every side, I suppose had been sent in an envelope, which probably some careful cook had borrowed to protect her turkey from the effects of a blazing fire;—the inattention to which I have discovered has a woeful effect upon Sir James's appetite.—In hastily collecting these papers together, the names of *Melville*, and *Melmoth*, met my eye. How then was I to resist, what was to me irresistible! Three or four words only excited my curiosity to read more.

" Letters ought to be held sacred"— you will tell me.—There we are both agreed; and I shewed my veneration by depositing them in my own escritoir

'till I had a convenient opportunity of reading them, which I obtained when I retired for the night. I then made such extracts as enabled me, with what I could collect from Sir James and Lady Mitford, to send you the anecdotes you wished for.

You are a hardened sinner, or you would have drawn very different conclusions from my narrative. Because you are a married man, and a few years older than I am, you have the conceit also to suppose yourself endowed with the wisdom of the East;—can *foretel*, and *foresee* certain *inclinations*,—*indications*,—and *inflammations*. Had you all the eyes of Argus combined in one, you might let that eye rest, for you are but a bungler at your trade, I can assure you.

I will convince you that I very much incline to Emily Melville. She is the magnet, that attracts both me and my horse. For although I mount him, fully determined not to go to Melmoth House, yet, so mechanically

does he turn that way, that I believe, if I very much resisted, he would go tail foremost, rather than be prevented. By all the laws of gravity! what is this but *inclination*?

And what can more forcibly indicate my love for Emily Melville than the thousand ridiculous mistakes I am perpetually making? If I ask Sir James to take wine,--I address him as Miss Melville.

If Lady Mitford enquires what I choose to take; I reply Miss Melville.

With me, Emily Melville is first, and second course; and completely presides at the dessert. Sceptic, as you are, you must allow these to be strong *indications* of my being in love.

And who shall dare affirm that I have not an *inflammation* of the heart? Do I not experience an unusual degree of heat, when I approach the goddess of my idolatry, attended by quickness of pulse, with fits of delirium? I hope you are now convinced

you are not quite qualified to take the place of one of the seven wise men.

I wish I had not so hastily stormed Mrs. Melmoth's carriage with her lovely protegee in it. The boldness of that enterprise would have succeeded with nine out of ten; though it has ruined me with her. Why, the devil! does she not have a ticket fixed upon her dress, to warn unwary travellers of their danger; and tell them that common-place flattery, and silly attentions, will never win her?

This morning I pleaded my cause with more seriousness than I have done before. She was very candid, and tolerably concise certainly; for she told me, without the smallest hesitation, that she never could esteem a man, whose conduct to her had been one continued series of insult upon her understanding.

I was begining an elaborate defence, when half a dozen Misses from Reading, attended by half a hundred brothers and cousins, came to congratu-

late Mrs. Melmoth upon her birth day. I took my leave as it is time to do of you.

Mrs. Melmoth is considerably above the common height; is graceful, and elegant in her manners; has fine eyes, but not the kind of expression in them, which is agreeable to me. If I tell you she dances with agility, as well as ease; and that she both sings, and plays with taste, I am afraid you will question my veracity, when I inform you Mrs. Melmoth completed her sixty-fifth year to day.

LETTER XII.

SIR CHARLES BELMONT TO MAJOR YORKE.

George Street, Feb. 13, 1812.

My dear Friend,

I HAVE now the pleasure of writing to you from my native country; which I quitted about eight years

ago, a few days after my coming of age.

A month has nearly passed since I returned, and I should have written to you before, had I known your address, which I have now learnt from Mr. Cleveland Howard.

I very much surprised Mr. Howard and my sister by my unexpected appearance; both of whom expressed those sentiments of affection highly gratifying to me after so long an absence.

Mr. Howard is just the same easy good creature he ever was. I cannot say my sister is improved in her temper. And that vulgarity, which would occasionly break out in her youth, has now become habitual; and upon every trifling incident, her displeasure is expressed in language, that would disgrace any female servant to use to a stable boy.

Mr. Howard's patience often excites my surprise. He is decidedly afraid of her. I think even you, when at your uncle Sir Everard's, used to shy

off; you will not then wonder I should be inclined to leave this house for a quiet lodging.

Horace is at Oxford. My sister tells me he is a fine young man. I hope he is improved in his general conduct, for as a boy he was very unpromising. Between him and me there is less difference in age, by several years, than between Mrs. Howard and myself.

As soon as I have given up my papers at the secretary of state's office, I intend going to Sunny Vale for a few days. The house is at present unoccupied, except by the gardener, and his wife.

My situation is greatly improved since I left England. Though a long minority, and the management of my worthy guardians, had produced a considerable sum, yet it was inadequate to the clearing incumbrances, which arose when my father's ill health prevented him from attending to his affairs; and perhaps were partly con-

tracted on my account, as well as partly what were left by my grandfather. I quitted England that I might have it in my power to discharge every demand upon Sunny Vale; and I have had the satisfaction of nearly accomplishing my design.

I had it in contemplation to lay aside my title, since it serves to increase expectation, and consequent disappointment, when my appearance necessarily falls below my rank in society. However, as success has attended my efforts to prevent my father's memory from being dishonored, I am resolved to retain the title, though unable to live in that style of elegant hospitality observed by my ancestors.

I wish you were coming to England, and would join me at Sunny Vale; and if I should be obliged to be in town, we might lodge in the same house, where I could enjoy the society of my friend with more pleasure than I should be able to do at my sister's, or at a coffee house.

In a few months I expect to be employed on an embassy to Portugal. My mind is too much occupied to allow me to indulge myself fully in the pleasure of correspondence; but I am ever yours most truly,

CHARLES BELMONT.

LETTER XIII.

MISS MELVILLE TO MISS ASHBOURNE.

Melmoth House, Feb. 5, 1812.

My dear Maria,

YOU will be grieved to hear that my long silence has been occasioned by the severe and sudden illness of my dear Mrs. Melmoth. So dangerous was it thought to be, that I could not leave her for a moment; and I am sure you will participate in the satisfaction I feel, in having it in my power to inform you that she is greatly recovered, though still extremely

weak, and languid; scarcely noticing any one but myself.

I had just finished my last letter to you, and was passing by Mrs. Melmoth's dressing room door, with it in my hand, when I heard an unusual noise. From her having had a fit once, I have ever since been apprehensive of a second, and studiously remain within hearing, except when she enjoins me to take the air, and allows her own woman, or the good Mrs. Caulfield, to be with her.

Alarmed by the noise, which I heard in her room, I went in, and found my kind, my beloved friend, extended on the floor; the blood streaming from her mouth. Oh! what a heart rending sight was this to me! My presence of mind, however, did not forsake me, terrified as I was. I flew to the bell, which I rang with violence: then raised the head of my dearest, best of friends, whom I began to think really dead, as I could not perceive the slightest motion; and I was yield-

ing to her weight, when Lucy and Langford came to my assistance. I dispatched a servant immediately for Doctor Syms. Most fortunately he was at that very time coming up the avenue, and in a few minutes entered the room. What a comfort was the presence of this good man to me! He relieved me from the apprehension that Mrs. Melmoth was dead; though he afforded me but little hope of her recovery from this illness. Unfortunately too, Lady Mitford is confined to her house by illness. Oh! how do I wish for your dear father's advice to direct me upon the subject of the unhappy dissension that has for so many years subsisted between Mrs. Melmoth and her family! Mrs. Melmoth's agitation was so extreme, the last time I mentioned the subject to her, that were I to renew it at this period, I fear another fit would be the consequence.

Yet, that a friend, I dearly love, should leave the world, retaining feel-

ings inimical to the religion we profess, I own, is to me a most painful reflection. I will yet hope a bed of sickness may produce a change of sentiments in my dear friend, who is fallen into a delightful sleep, which I flatter myself will greatly refresh her.

I will now, my dear Maria, quit my pen, and try to gain a little repose myself, that I may be better able to go through the duties of the day; and I hope to have an improved account to give you before I send off this letter.

In continuation.

Alas! my dear Maria, Mrs. Melmoth is no more. That sleep, which I vainly flattered myself would refresh her, was her last. Before I composed myself to rest, I once more looked in upon her, and thought her paleness greatly increased. An alteration had also taken place in her breathing. In great agitation, I called the nurse to her assistance. I ran to Dr. Syms's

door, for he has slept in the house several nights. All, alas! was over, before he entered the room. You, my dear Maria, can more easily imagine, than I describe, the agonies of that moment.

In this dear woman I have lost the kindest best of friends. And my love makes me the more lament that strong resentment, which marked her conduct to her family. Her mind was undoubtedly much injured by the cruel disappointment she experienced in her youth; and large allowances will be made by her friends for her errors; her many virtues only will be, I trust, remembered by them. While your dear father lives, you cannot enter into my present feelings, my dear Maria. Long, very long may such a heavy affliction be spared to the friend of my heart! I cannot pursue the subject farther; but must bid you, adieu.

Affectionate love to Mr. Ashbourne.

LETTER XIV.

HON. G, BRENSLY TO C. HOWARD, ESQ.

Mitford Lodge, Feb, 28, 1812.

WELL! Howard, the old girl has tipp'd the perch! Had a fit ten days ago, and died six days after!

We are all terribly long-faced here upon the occasion.—For myself, I have not suffered my heels to touch the ground for several days. So still! —so quiet!—we speak only in whispers. My own voice would absolutely scare me.—However I shall go into the woods, and have a little conversation with my dog. In the house I dare not cry, *hem!* for though we are at the distance of nearly two miles from Melmoth house, we observe such strict decorum upon the occasion, that we glide about as if it were a sin to be heard.

I cannot conceive what all this mighty precaution is about, unless they are afraid of recalling Mrs. Melmoth to life again.

From a few words, dropped by Lady Mitford this morning, I do believe Miss Melville is really left heiress to Mrs. Melmoth's whole property. She was very much shocked by the death of Mrs. Melmoth; and still continues very sorrowful; and, on my credit, I believe her grief is sincere.

I could well be dispensed with at this time, but I don't want to go just yet. Two months was to be the term of my visit. A week, and a day, are wanting to complete it. For the universe, I would not disobey my revered father; or appear insensible to the civilities of his old friend, which you know, Howard, might be imputed to me, if I were to go a day, or even an hour, before the given and accepted period had died a natural death.

I should much like to know what the heiress intends to do with herself.

But, while she is in the dolefuls, I dare not go near her; though I have been pulling down my chin to give a proper length to my phiz. Faith! on consideration, I think I had better put myself in the hands of the old housekeeper again; she will make me look dismal enough to join in weeping, and wailing.

LETTER XV.

MISS MELVILLE TO MISS ASHBOURNE.

Melmoth House, March 7, 1812.

THE agitation of my spirits would not permit me, my dear Maria, to answer your very affectionate letter. Your good father will be pleased to hear, that I am not without a well-informed, respectable female friend on this melancholy occasion. As I could not have the comfort of dear Lady Mitford, Dr. Syms had the kind-

ness to bring his sister to be with me a few days.

Sir James, assisted by Dr. Syms, took on themselves the direction for the obsequies of my dear lamented friend, which were performed the eighth evening after her decease, as she had particularly requested. Sir James wrote to Sir Charles Belmont, and likewise to Mr. Howard, informing them of the melancholy event: and also when the funeral was to take place; and that the will was to be opened the same evening. None of the family attended. But a solicitor and his clerk arrived before Sir James and Dr. Syms returned from seeing the remains of my kind friend deposited in the family vault. I was alone in the drawing room, indulging that sorrow, which the loss of such a friend must ever excite in a heart, I trust, not devoid of gratitude; and I did not perceive their entrance. How they found their way into the room, or how long they were there, I know not, as

all the domestics were in attendance at the funeral, except the poor old gardener and his wife, whom I had desired to come to the house. Mrs. Mary Syms had left me for the purpose of writing a note. Hearing a little sort of a bustle in the house, occasioned by the return of the family, I hastily rose to retire for a few minutes, and compose myself; but was so surprised to find myself in the presence of strangers, that Sir James and Dr. Syms entered before any explanation could take place, and I withdrew, leaving the visitors to the care of my friends.

After they had taken some refreshment, Sir James sent for me to be present at the opening of the will. During the reading, and at the conclusion, the solicitor and his companion could not refrain from some animadversions, which I could not distinctly hear, but I believe Sir James, who was nearer to them, did, as he came, and, taking my hand, said,—"You will do well to retire"—nor was

I sorry to be released from so painful a situation.

I have not time to enter into the particulars of Mrs. Melmoth's bequest, and can only inform you that, except remembrances to friends, and servants, she has left to me, her adopted child, the whole of her vast wealth; for such I may consider it;—the child of her bounty; the orphan daughter of a poor curate, who had it not in his power to provide more than a bare subsistence for his child.—I hope that I may prove myself not altogether unworthy such a distinction in my favor.

I will write again soon: and to dear Mr. Ashbourne I shall submit a plan for his approbation, that has long occupied my thoughts. And, with dutiful affection to him, and love to yourself, I am ever yours.

LETTER XVI.

HON. G. BRENSLY TO C. HOWARD. ESQ.

March 7, 1812.

My dear Howard,

I WRITE from Reading, just while my horse is regaling himself with a little refreshment; an example his ill-fated master has no inclination to follow.

A fortnight more, and my horse would have but a skeleton to carry to Glenmore Castle. Several hours have I been riding I know not where. I cannot make up my mind to quit the field, though I have no pretence for prolonging my visit, as to-morrow my furlough expires.

Mrs. Melmoth is safely deposited in the family vault. Something very extraordinary is on the tapis; but I am not entrusted with the secret. Miss

Melville's name is never mentioned but with a degree of reverence. As for my head, it has a great inclination to bow at every mention of her name. I almost begun to fear the lovely Emily was dead, and that these good people had it in contemplation to canonize her for a *she* saint. This morning, at breakfast, I asked the question. The man of wood turned quick upon his pivot, and with eyes larger than his spectacles, and a loud *Sir!* made me start, and almost overset my chair. My unlucky foot did kick down the muffins upon Pug and her puppies. Wack! wack! bow! wow! yelped the animals. The scraps of muffin and butter upon the rug, they were so good as to lick up, which soon reconciled all parties. Pug extended herself before the fire, and did the honors of her nursery, to the edification of the company.

Silence being once more restored, I ventured to ask Sir James if I might be permitted to visit Miss Melville,

before I left Berkshire.—"Sir," said he, "my late worthy friend appointed me guardian to Miss Melville; but I shall have no occasion to enter into office (lord chancellor to his majesty to be sure) as the young lady came of age, the day after the decease of Mrs. Melmoth. I shall ever be happy to advise, and assist that excellent young woman; but she is so superior to any thing that has ever come within my knowledge, (which is very possible) that I can only presume to say, I believe visitors at this time would be unseasonable."—"May I write?" I asked. "Most certainly," he replied, "and I wish I could assure you your letters would be favorably received. I am no flatterer, nor am I at liberty to be more explicit. I would not advise you to make any further advances; as it is very probable you may not long continue to have those sentiments for Miss Melville, you have at present." I took the alarm, and impatiently enquired if I had a rival.—

"None," Sir James sneezed out from under the bridge of his spectacles. Adding. "Many offers has Miss Melville had, but she has never shewn a partiality of an exclusive description for any."—"Perhaps she is a flirt," I said. "*Sir!*" replied my solemn gentleman, "I will not suffer any one to speak of that young lady disrespectfully in my hearing. I have known her almost from her infancy, and the more we know of her, the higher does she stand both in lady Mitford's estimation, and my own. She is too conscious of her own worth, to suffer herself to be tricked out of her affection by grimace, and"—

I did not allow him to conclude the sentence, but making him a respectful bow, the baronet, I believe, thought he had treated his friend's son too cavalierly; therefore, to soften matters a little, he added, "I know no one deserving Miss Melville, but I hope to see her united to a man, who may

understand how to appreciate such a treasure.

Being lumped among the undeserving throng, I must be satisfied with what vanity whispers me; and I cannot but think these good folks must have a strange set of stupid ideas, not to admire such a fine gay fellow as *George Brensly*.

Well! I will be off to-morrow; and return a few weeks hence, just to reconnoitre.

I strongly suspect there is a rival, notwithstanding Sir James's assertions to the contrary. How the devil should he know! It is not very likely a young girl should make such a piece of formality the confidant in her love affairs. If he *has* a heart, it is in a frame of wood; for he looks exactly like an old clock-case.. I beg pardon; --he is my father's friend, and I will spare him.--If I forget him--.

Write to me, dear Howard; a long letter too, for I shall be confoundedly in the dumps for a month to come;

and shall be ashamed to shew my weather beaten countenance at Glenmore castle. I appear as though I had stood out in a high wind for three months. In fact, I feel more chagrined by this affair, than I care to acknowledge even to myself; though an unlucky jest will pop in uninvited by me. Direct your next to me at Glenmore Castle.

LETTER XVII.

SIR CHARLES BELMONT TO MAJOR YORKE.

George Street, March 8, 1812.

My dear Friend,

BY the papers you are informed of the death of my aunt Melmoth; and also of Miss Melville being left heiress to estates of the value of six thousand a year, besides a considerable sum of funded property;—an ingenious method of informing the public

that a young woman of fortune is to be disposed of to the highest bidder.

I am not disappointed, I assure you, as I had formed no expectations of my aunt's ever departing from her avowed intention of making her adopted child (as the phrase continually was) her heiress, to the exclusion of her sister's family.

Sir James Mitford wrote to inform Mr. Howard and myself of the event; and that Mrs. Melmoth was to be interred the eighth evening after her decease, according to her own directions; and that the will was to be opened the same evening. Sir James added, that he was too well acquainted with the contents of the will to suppose it would be agreeable to me to attend the reading.

I answered that my presence seemed quite unnecessary; but, if it would afford any satisfaction to him, I would wave my own objections, and meet him at Melmoth House; not, however, without hearing from him again. I

told him I could not but observe, that the papers, which announced the death of Mrs. Melmoth, also explained the purport of her will; a circumstance surely of a singular nature, considering the will as still unopened.

My sister is quite outrageous, and her violence against Miss Melville exceeds all bounds: nothing heard but invectives, and sneers against the heiress; and lamentations that her dear Horace, her only child, should be cheated out of his lawful inheritance. In her passionate declamations she totally forgets my affinity, and prior claim to that of her son.

I wish she would refrain, and not expose herself so uselessly to every acquaintance, who accidently visits at the house. I do not pretend to more magnanimity than other men; and, in my still straightened circumstances, an addition, such as Mrs. Melmoth could easily have made, would have been highly convenient. Mr. Howard sent his solicitor to hear the will, and pro-

cure a copy, which I suppose detains him, as he is not yet returned.

Again has the death of Mrs. Melmoth appeared in the papers, with this curious explanation;—that the alleged disposition of her property was premature, as Mrs. Melmoth's will had not then been opened.

I should have attributed this correction to the observation I had made in my letter to Sir James Mitford; but that was impossible, as the paragraph must have been sent to the paper before he could receive my letter.

We are very much at a loss to account for this incident, Mrs. Howard's opinion is, that it is done to excite the attention of the public, and promote enquiries *who*, and *where*, this rich heiress is.

The duplicity, and art of this young woman, is a labyrinth I have no inclination to pursue. She must have an adviser well practised; and be an apt scholar herself, to exhibit such proficiency.

I am soliciting for an appointment, that is to take me from my native clime again. The little satisfaction, I am likely to experience in England, is too precarious to make me anxious for continuing here.

. An express from Melmoth House! what can be the meaning of this!

In continuation.

A letter from Sir James Mitford, the contents of which has strangely surprised me, and made my sister as violent as ever. It is concise;—contains a request on the part of Miss Melville, to see me and Mrs. Howard at Melmoth House; expressing a persuasion, that, if we would condescend to comply with her request, she flatters herself the proposal she has to make will meet with our approbation.

I wrote in answer to Sir James, that both Mr. Howard, and my sister, were

too unwell to leave their home at present; and that it required some consideration before I could give a decided answer to Miss Melville's very extraordinary application; but that I would write by the post the next day.

I feel the greatest difficulty in determining what course to pursue. Some scheme on foot, no doubt! Perhaps a defect in the title of some part of my grandfather's property; or she may have been informed that my signature is necessary for her security. Artful, and insidious as she is, I am too well fortified to be taken in her wiles.

Another motive this damsel may have; perhaps she is fearful of meeting with many sarcastic remarks, when she comes abroad, which would be obviated if she could make it appear to the world that she was on good terms with Mrs. Melmoth's relatives. In this she will be disappointed. Mrs. Howard's aversion is not to be removed, were the present object as amiable, as she is base.

In these *pros* and *cons* have we passed the three last days. I own I have a womanish curiosity to know what further plan of mischief she is contriving to injure us.

The word *proposal* dwells much on my sister's mind, as Mr. Howard immediately exclaimed,—" Oh! the heiress intends to *propose* marriage to Sir Charles." At this suggestion, my sister absolutely screamed; and was almost choaked with passion, before she could give utterance, or articulate a single word.

At last she replied with vehemence, —" That shall never be! that vile hussey has done irreparable mischief in the family already; and, if I thought it probable for my brother so to disgrace himself, I should go mad!"— " But, my dear sister," I cried, " don't you think five, or six thousand a year, would be a tempting bait to a poor baronet?" " Oh! don't mention it! Such an event would even be more insupportable, than the loss of our an-

cestor's possessions; I would sooner follow you to the grave, Charles, than see you united to so detestable a fiend. She has some such scheme in her noddle, I dare say. Artful creature! brought up upon the charity of my foolish aunt; yet give herself such intolerable airs! I am resolved, if you go down to Melmoth Park, to go with you. You have made me quite ill with your suggestions."

Mrs. Howard was indeed so ill from the effects of passion, as to be obliged to go to bed. Yet she would insist on my hearing her, after she had retired to her apartment.

I used every argument in my power to quiet her perturbed mind, by representing the absurdity of imagining, for one moment, that a girl, knowing herself to be an object deserving our just contempt, could possibly entertain such an idea of my folly, as to think of my marrying her.

Mrs. Howard quite exhausted herself by abuse of my aunt; her protegee;

Sir James; and every human being of their acquaintance.—I entreated her to spare Mrs. Melmoth, and recollect she was the sister of our mother; that there were those, who very much respected Mrs. Melmoth; and that we were not acquainted with the particulars of a disagreement so injurious to us in its effects. "Charles! Charles! leave the room! I shall go distracted! Poor, mean-spirited wretch as you are, you deserve every thing that has happened!"

I let her go on without farther opposition. Her voice became weaker and weaker, 'till, I believe, she was asleep, and left the room. I hear she had a tolerable night.

Our friend Goldsworth is waiting for my letter, which I am finishing while at breakfast. I will conclude the subject in my next.

LETTER XVIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

George Street, March 12, 1812.

I THINK, my dear friend, I took leave of you at Mr. Howard's breakfast table, and to that I must return to give you a distinct idea of our proceedings, though, to be sure, we have not moved one step further, than we were when I wrote to you yesterday.

Mr. Howard asked me if I intended to go into Berkshire, or take no further notice of Sir James's letter. I replied, "To Sir James I certainly shall write to-day, and I think of going down next Wednesday."—"Wednesday?" repeated Mr. Howard; "this is Saturday!" he continued,—"I think if we refrain from speaking upon the subject that annoys her, your sister may be well enough to accompany you." I

earnestly requested him to persuade my sister out of any such intention, as it would be productive of unpleasant altercations, and could answer no good purpose whatever; and that it would be much better for him to go than Mrs. Howard.—"I persuade your sister to desist from any purpose on which she is bent! You do not know her, Sir Charles! I have long ceased to attempt any thing so useless."

Breakfast being removed, I went to pay a few visits, telling Mr. Howard, I hoped I should have his company to Melmoth Park, and that, on my return, I would write to Sir James.

I came in, half an hour before dinner, and found my sister well enough to be in the drawing room. In conformity with Mr. Howard's request, I resolved not to renew the subject of the letter; and flattered myself we should pass a few hours in quiet, if not in happiness; for that, I begin to think, is not

possible where this termagant sister of mine presides.

I had, however, no choice, as Mrs. Howard immediately began;—"So brother! I find you intend going to Melmoth House on Wednesday! By that time I shall be well enough to accompany you."—"My dear sister, I beseech you not to think of it. I am really in fear for your health; and surely, on every account, it will be better for Mr. Howard to—" "Finely settled between you! My Husband, of all men upon earth, to go upon business! You might as well take Horace's raven with you. He will do nothing but croak, 'till he gives you the horrors, as he often does me. And, after this curious arrangement between you and Mr. Howard, I am determined no power on earth shall prevent my going, with you, or without you." I found she was mounting higher and higher; so, like her poor devil of a husband, I yielded to her whims; and we became good friends.

Wednesday is absolutely fixed for our departure. In the intervening time I shall look for lodgings, that I may not return to this house again. I have seen apartments in a respectable house in Grosvenor Street, which I am inclined to secure. During the sitting of parliament, it is necessary I should have some residence in London; otherwise I should rather pass my time wholly in Kent.

I again repeat my wish, that you could leave your Regiment, and spend a few weeks at Sunny Vale. You are a sportsman, and I think I can promise you some diversion, though so late in the season.

The country, I assure you, is charming. You will not see it now to advantage. I used to be delighted with it, when a boy, and I am told it is improved since I saw it. Many noblemen's seats enrich the scenery of the beauteous, and highly cultivated valley at the base of Marams-court Hill.

You shall hear from me as soon as we return from this formidable expedition, for which I find my sister is making preparations fit for an East India voyage.

Strange inconsistent woman! I had great difficulty to persuade her to put on mourning, though Mr. Howard and myself did so immediately. I really wish this visit over; or that I had not promised to go. However, there is only one day more; so you must not suppose I am writing on the same day I begun this letter. Let me hear from you soon.

LETTER XIX.

HON. G. BRENSLY TO C. HOWARD, ESQ.

Glenmore Castle, March 23, 1812.

My dear Friend,

AFTER a pretty good ramble, in the hope of meeting with some

new adventure to drive out the shreds of the last, here I am. Country theatres; election balls; and a short trip to Brighton, have filled up the space of three weeks, since I wrote to you last.

To Brighton I did not go for the benefit of bathing, or sea air. The latter I found so confoundedly sharp, that I had no inclination to souse into the sea; and I was glad to take myself off again at the end of a week.

I went to Brighton to meet Beverly. You have seen him;—the most restless of mortals; never easy, or quiet any where. His humour exactly suits mine at present; only we pull different ways, like my truant beagles when coupled: the strongest, or most persevering has the advantage of the other. Will was inclined to go north. I was for a southerly direction. Beverly had the mastery, and we steered for Glenmore Castle.

In a few hours after my return, my

good father made some observations on my looks;—that I was thinner, and he anxiously enquired if I had been ill. I satisfied his lordship by saying, I had used more exercise than usual. That little gypsey, Harriet, was not to be put off so easily. Going behind my chair, in a feigned voice she said, "Miss Melville! my lord!" I was fool enough to turn my head round, as if I expected to see that charming woman enter the room. The flush upon my cheek, with the unmerciful mirth of Harriet, made my father curious to know what the saucy girl meant. "Only, my lord, that poor George has been desperately in love. Look, my dear sir, at these neglected locks of my woe begone brother. Come; do cry, George, I beseech you; I never saw a man in love cry."—"Have you done, Harriet?"—Yes; for the present." My father casting his enquiring eyes towards me, demanded an explanation, which I was beginning to give him, describing Miss Melville

as the loveliest of her sex. "With the due and customary exceptions, you know, George."—"Now, Harriet, I shall punish you by not gratifying your curiosity. Not a syllable more shall you hear;" "Indeed, dear George, you must; you have begun your confession, and I insist upon hearing you out."—"Beverly is waiting for you, Harriet."—"Why did not you tell me so before? I shall leave you, and papa; I had rather go and plague your friend."

Away she tripped: and I acknowledged how necessary to my happiness was the obtaining the hand of Miss Melville; though I had little hope of success. Lord Glenmore was highly pleased by my candour.

Is it not extraordinary, that though these papas and mammas are always giving lessons of prudence, and guarding young people against falling in love, yet are they delighted to hear their boys and girls describe their *emotions*, *palpitations*, &c. So it was

in this instance;--I had only to sigh; look dismal; and describe the beauty of my fair enslaver, when my father entered most warmly into my cause; and even offered to write to the lady. But I will see the letter. He may make love for himself, perhaps.

Jesting apart; Miss Melville ever treated my overtures with inattention; affecting to disbelieve I was serious. And, between ourselves, his lordship would be equally incredulous, but that I look like an hunted devil.

As you are connected with Sir Charles Belmont's family, don't fail to send me what intelligence you can of proceedings at the park. Though I well know every item will be highly garnished by your sister in law, yet shall I be much gratified by any information you can give me of that loveliest of women; would that I could say—*my* Emily,

Harriet is teazing me to walk with her. The request of a pretty girl,

though my sister, never can be lightly regarded.

by your's,

GEORGE BRENSLY.

LETTER XIX.

SIR CHARLES BELMONT TO MAJOR YORKE.

Melmoth House, March 24, 1812.

I SUPPOSE, my dear Yorke, you concluded your friend annihilated, or kidnapped, as I have not written since I informed you the day was fixed for our leaving town. However, satisfy yourself I am in the land of the living, by reading the following narrative.

Observe the date. Here I am, writing after all the family are retired to rest.

Such extraordinary events have

taken place within a few hours, that I have scarcely sufficient recollection to give you an idea of the various transactions of the day.

As this important day requires a little preface, and I am not inclined to sleep, I will dedicate some hours to you; but you must have patience, and return with me to George Street, and I will bring you safe through many perilous scenes, and narrow escapes, to Melmoth House.

Wednesday, as I informed you, was the day fixed for our leaving town. My sister was again ill; and Mr. Howard so earnestly entreated me not to go without her, that I was obliged to send my servant with a note to put off our meeting, and yesterday sent again to inform Sir James of our intention of being with him this evening.

Being little more than forty miles from town, there was no necessity for leaving George Street at any unseasonable hour; particularly as we

proposed dining at Reading, which is not more than two miles from Melmoth Park,

We had so completely worn out all conjecture and surmise as to the end to be obtained in this visit, that we were become tolerably quiet; and I flattered myself we should continue in that frame of mind, 'till our interview with the heiress was over.

Unexpectedly, Horace arrived in the evening; having quarrelled with his tutor, who, it appears, remonstrated with him for some excesses he had committed; such as intoxication; breaking lamps; windows; &c. which the young man not easily brooking, left Oxford to make his complaints known to his mother, who, he was very sure, would defend him, without any inconvenient examination into the merits of the case.

Though his abilities are cast in a very ordinary mould, with proper management, he might have been a respectable character, had my sister

done her duty as a mother; but his capacity, such as it is, has been cruelly neglected by not having early attention paid to its cultivation.

For want of some laudable pursuit, I am told, he is for ever in mischief. I discovered immediately that Mr. Howard's authority is held in equal contempt by the son, and by the mother.

This young man's return was likely to make a considerable alteration in our measures, as my sister protested against the leaving him, having not beheld him for the immense space of two long months; and I cherished a hope, that I should either go by myself, or have only Mr. Howard, without endangering my sister's health by fits or fainting.

This pleasurable idea was but for a short duration. Finding Mr. and Mrs. Howard were inclined to give the subject a thorough discussion, I retired early, leaving them to arrange all matters to their own satisfaction.

About three o'clock in the morning, I was roused by Mrs. Howard's bell, and presently found the whole family were in motion. I heard my sister's door frequently open and shut. I rang my bell to enquire if she, or Mr. Howard were ill. Scarcely had I done this, when I was confounded with the most outrageous bustle of altercation,—"I will!"—"You shall not!"—"He shall!" Which latter, I plainly distinguished to be my sister's voice, in alto. All apprehensions for her health subsided; and soon after four o'clock, I was summoned to breakfast.

I enquired of the servant, who brought a light, the reason of our rising so early.—"Why! your honour must have heard the combustion, that has raised all us poor servants from our warm beds. There has not been such an uproaring since your honour's arrival."—"You may say I shall soon be with them. Beg your mistress not to wait breakfast." I cannot say I was

delighted with rising at four, to travel only forty miles, when an earlier hour would not have been required for three times that distance.

When I entered the breakfast room, I found, as first upon the canvass, my sister, whose eyes were swollen, and her face enflamed with passion. She was pouring out the coffee into the saucer;—on the napkin, &c. Mr. Howard sat staring at the fire; kicking one foot against the other without speaking to any one. As for Horace, he was whistling, and drawing the eatables about him; as who should say, "what care I!" I soon found silence was to be the order of the day; and, having no inclination to infringe that order, I readily adopted it, well knowing the first that broke silence would give the signal for attack and defence.

I had not long enjoyed this unusual quiet, when my hopeful nephew sounded to arms, by saying to his mother;—"I am ready to attend you;

madam; shall I order the carriage?" I was surprised by this question. My countenance, I believe, expressed as much; for Mr. Howard exclaimed, "Well may you be astonished, Sir Charles; surely, no one but that infatuated mother would allow a son to go out with her, under such circumstances as he appears in here."—"What circumstances, Mr. Howard, do you allude to? I dare say, you, and others have been guilty of many worse actions than my poor boy. The lamps and broken windows can be repaired; and he tells me, he does not owe more than sixty, or seventy pounds, for wine. And, as for that old fool Elliot, he shall be dismissed immediately."—"What!" cried Mr. Howard, "for endeavouring to prevent your son from falling into vicious habits?" "Horace did not fall into the kennel, as I remember you did."—"Shameful woman! to reproach me with an accident, which you well know was in consequence of severe illness."—"Really, Mr. How-

ard," my sister cried, "you are quite abusive to me, and cruel to your son, who is a more dutiful child than you deserve." Tears were now called up, and fell in torrents; but to no effect. The kennel story roused Mr. Howard more than I imagined any thing, short of a bastinado, could have done; and in a loud tone he declared, "Elliot shall not be dismissed. I have yielded to your every wish, madam, 'till you are miserable yourself, and have made your house a very bedlam. Too long have I been passive; but, now I see what alarming consequences must result from such indulgence, it would be criminal in me not to exert myself to save our son from inevitable ruin. Therefore if *you*, sir, refuse to make proper concessions to Dr. Elliot, I shall be compelled to take such measures with *you*, sir, as shall convince *you* my authority is not to be disputed with impunity by *you*, however lightly it may be esteemed by your mother." Horace looked very serious; made a

respectful bow to his father; and quitted the room. As for my sister, she did not stay to hear more than one sentence; though Mr. Howard imagined she was paying all proper attention.

You are to understand that my brother had not acquired quite courage enough to take his eyes off from his favorite object, the fire; and therefore was not aware the principle auditor had withdrawn. Finding (contrary to the usual practice of the house) all quiet; he ventured to take a survey of the room; and was not a little disappointed, as well as surprised, to find his audience so much diminished.

I am persuaded Howard never has, in his own house, spoken so many words at one time, without interruption, since he was married. I endeavoured to soften his disappointment, by approving, and encouraging him to persevere in directing the conduct of his son.

I cannot describe all that passed

during three hours after breakfast, before the carriage was ordered. And, when it was announced, no Horace was to be found.

A counter order was given, and two hours more elapsed before it came again to the door. You admire my patience; but I assure you I have no claim to that virtue in this instance, as I rather rejoiced at any delay that might prevent our arriving at Reading before five o'clock, the hour at which dinner was ordered. And, as I was fully determined not to return to George Street again, I felt less annoyance upon this occasion, than I should if I had expected to have again been one of Mrs. Howard's domestic party. My sister's anxiety became so great, that messengers were dispatched over half the town in search of her darling, as she frequently calls him. The butler, who seems well acquainted with his young master's tricks, went to a livery stable, which it appears he frequents; and there was informed that

Mr. Horace had taken a hack from their stable, soon after eight o'clock.

At length we actually got into the carriage, and arrived at Reading before five. As we drove up to the door of the Crown Inn, out came Horace; delight depicted in his countenance, as conscious of having performed some meritorious exploit. I observed great coolness, and told him his conduct was highly reprehensible; and, if persisted in, would bring disgrace upon himself and family, "Nay! my most sober uncle! it was not many years since you was at college. You surely cannot have forgotten some little freaks of fancy. Your's, perhaps, were more amongst the girls. I think I must relent, and take this fresh tack," My sister smiled, and admired the humour of the youth. I abstained from making any reply; betaking myself to my own cogitations, which were not much better adapted to amuse me, than the foregoing altercation.

When dinner was over, we proceeded to Melmoth House, where we arrived soon after seven this evening; if it may so be called, as the clock has just struck one, and I must pause awhile before I proceed any farther.

LETTER XX.

In continuation.

HAVING in vain endeavoured to sleep, I may as well resume my pen; and having brought you to the door of Melmoth House, I will hand you in, as Sir James Mitford did my sister, leading her to the drawing room, where we expected to meet Miss Melville; but we were agreeably disappointed by finding Lady Mitford alone; and to her we were regularly introduced.

We were all a little ceremonious. Sir James is so naturally; nor was it

possible to feel at ease under such circumstances as had brought us together.

We talked of the fine weather 'till we heard the rain beat against the windows. We discussed the good and bad roads, like commissioners at a turnpike meeting. Tea, and Coffee over, and many common occurrences disposed of, I thought it time to notice the purport of Sir James's letter, as he did not; nor was the heiress ever alluded to. However, I was prevented by Sir James requesting Lady Mitford to take Mr. H. Howard to see a small museum, which he thought was worthy his attention.

My sister's countenance changed in an instant; and I expected she would oppose his leaving the room.—Silent we were for several minutes after the door closed upon Lady Mitford and Horace.

I first dissolved the charm, by saying; "Sir James, did I understand your note right, that Miss Melville had something to communicate per-

sonally? But, as we have not yet seen the lady, it is necessary to give some directions to the servants." Sir James immediately arose; "My dear sir, Miss Melville only waits my summons." And he was leaving the room, when Mrs. Howard, in her usual abrupt unpleasant manner, observed—"Really I think Miss what-do-you-call-her might have had the civility to have attended on us in town, and not have required our dancing attendance after her."—"A little patience, my good lady," cried Sir James, "and, in a short time, you will be convinced you have not been trifled with. Miss Melville would very readily have attended you in town, but it is necessary that I should be present at the interview, and unfortunately my health will not allow me to sleep in London." "Umph!" was all the notice taken of this explanation by Mrs. Howard, on whose brow I saw a threatening storm ready to burst.

In Sir James's absence I endeavour-

ed to calm her, and was so fortunate as to persuade her into more composure; when the door opened, and Sir James entered, leading in the most beautiful woman I ever beheld in this country, or any other.

I dropped my sister's hand, which I had just taken.—I was lost in admiration;—absolutely stood like a statue, while Miss Melville (for she it was) advanced in the most graceful manner to Mrs. Howard, whose hand she attempted to take; but a repulsive action of my sister checked, and evidently increased her agitation. She soon however recovered, and addressed herself to me in a voice the most melodious;—a voice which might be said "to soften rocks, or bend the knotted oak," could it have made any impression on the temper, or disposition of my sister. She asked me how long I had been in England:—if I found it difficult to procure pasports. Trivial as these questions may appear, they brought on something like a conversa-

tion, and gave her a little time to recollect herself. She soon assumed courage to open the business, which she introduced by enquiring of Sir James if the papers were in the room. When these were pointed out to her, she once more advanced to Mrs. Howard, who, in spite of her determination to keep aloof, could not forbear to return something like a civil answer.—"Sir James," she began, "has informed you, my dear madam, and you Sir Charles, of the circumstances, which have rendered it impossible that I should wait on you in town; I should otherwise have spared you the pain of attending me here. You will, I trust, excuse my adverting to the purport of Mrs. Melmoth's will, as an apology for the liberty I have taken in requesting the present interview." My sister impatiently interrupted her, by enquiring where Mrs. Melmoth's will was. "This is it, madam," replied Miss Melville, presenting the will, which my sister hastily seized, and

threw it on the fire, from which I fortunately succeeded in rescuing it. Sir James expressed himself in terms of strong displeasure, because the will, as he observed, had not been proved. But Miss Melville made very light of it; saying, it would have been of little consequence to her. Then turning to me, "You, Sir Charles, will see the kind intentions of my benefactress to me, of which, however, I never shall avail myself.—You appear surprised, sir; but, when I have explained my motives, you will be so no longer." I bowed in silent astonishment, and she continued;—"Had Mrs. Melmoth's mind never been injured by illness, I have no doubt she would have made a very different disposition of her property. As that was a misfortune she could not remedy, I consider myself in trust only to fulfil what I think would have been her will, had no such calamity happened to my best friend.—Pardon me, I entreat you, for thus paying a tribute to the memory of

one; who has been to me as a kind parent." Her voice faltered; but, wiping the tear of gratitude from her fine eyes, she returned to the subject, by saying, "It is my duty to rescue the character of my deceased friend from the tongue of calumny. To you therefore, Sir Charles, I resign all claim, I may have under your aunt's will, either to the estate in Sussex, or Berkshire. The personals you, and Mrs. Howard, will divide, as may be most agreeable to you. The family jewels, and what appertains to Melmoth House, have ever been considered heirlooms. As such, they now become the property of Sir Charles Belmont."

Here she ceased to speak, as expecting a reply from some of her auditors. I hastily took her hand, and raised it to my lips. Utterance was denied me; and I quitted the room for a few minutes, that I might not betray the womanish weakness, of which I was guilty.

What an angel is this! I cannot,

even at this moment, describe what my sensations were. Well might my aunt prefer her to her relations. None had she, not one, deserving her esteem, when compared with the child of her adoption—I, that came filled with every species of prejudice, found it impossible to retain any sentiment but that of admiration, the moment I saw her and heard the music of her voice.

But I keep you in suspence, while I am indulging, however pardonable, a panegyric on this extraordinary young woman. On my rejoining them, I entreated Miss Melville to excuse, and make allowance for, the effect her unparalleled generosity had on my feelings :—a generosity so unexpected, that it was impossible for me to give expression to the half of what I felt upon the present occasion. The smile of a cherub played about her mouth as she replied—" You will have many claims upon you, Sir Charles.—The servants have all handsome legacies, or annuities left them. There are also

friends to be remembered; and twenty poor people to be supported in an alms house, which I engaged to superintend; an injunction, which I hold sacred; and I never can relinquish the charge to any one.---I, also, must become your pensioner." Mrs. Howard, with the quickness of lightening, asked Miss Melville if there were no apartments at liberty in the almonry, which she might occupy. I actually started from my seat, while an exclamation of displeasure and mortification escaped. "Mrs. Howard!—sister!—surely you cannot be conscious what you are saying!" Miss Melville looked surprised, and answering her with a slight degree of hauteur in her manner, she renewed the subject by addressing me. "— I am persuaded, Sir Charles, you will not think me very unreasonable, that I should require proper security from you for the fulfilment of every bequest to others; though I may choose to relinquish my own claims, yet I cannot consent that Mrs. Mel-

moth's will shall be destroyed, 'till some arrangement has been made for the benefit of the legatees. And this is the business, which occasioned my wish to have an interview with you and Mrs. Howard, in the presence of Sir James Mitford."

So then, Henry, this is the business, which we construed into an attack upon my person.—I wish you could have seen her at this moment. Her countenance having recovered its usual character, her bright hazel eyes shone with benignity. Conscious rectitude animated every feature; and a rich glow mantled on her cheek, as the subject affected her sensibility.

So determined was she on executing the plan she had formed, for rescuing her revered friend's memory from obloquy, that she appeared not to hear several ungracious remarks made by my ungracious sister. Ah! thought I, if she *has* heard them, how despicable must she think we are! and with what an impression must both

Sir James, and Miss Melville have departed, when they left us at night. Indeed they have but too just cause to despise us; if they think I am of the same disposition as my sister.

On Miss Melville's again mentioning the personals becoming our joint property, after the legacies are paid, Mrs. Howard, with the most avaricious eagerness, cried," Pray Miss Melville, what will my share be?"— "It is not in my power to tell you," " replied Miss Melville" Sir James is in possession of the papers, and can give you the necessary information better than I am able to do. Mrs. Melmoth was very charitable."---- "So I understand," said Mrs. Howard, She brought you up at her own expense."—You are insufferable, Mrs Howard," I cried. Sir James however completely mortified her by replying, "Yes, Madam; to Mrs. Melmoth's bounty is Miss Melville indebted for giving her an opportunity of shewing her niece, this evening, what true greatness of mind is. I feared

my sister would expose herself. She did not. Sir James said, he had taken the liberty to detain our horses; Miss Melville having had apartments prepared for our reception.

Lady Mitford and Horace now joined us, and the evening passed away delightfully. Sir James, with the gallantry of past times, took my sister's hand, and conducted her to a room, where a small, but elegant supper, was provided, and placed her at the upper end of the table, Here, I could not forbear interfering; and exclaimed, "Miss Melville! this must not be!"—"Indeed it must, Sir Charles; I am only a visitor"! A faint smile accompanied her answer; though a tear glistened in her eye. Sir James said, he only acted under the directions of his young friend.

I will resume my pen again, if I find as little disposition to sleep to-morrow night, as I have done the last. How different are my sensations at this time, and when I left Gower Street yesterday.

LETTER XXI.

SIR C. BELMONT TO MAJOR YORKE.

I WISH, my dear Friend, you could tell me what method to adopt with this strange sister of mine, whom I am more and more ashamed of. It is a matter of astonishment, as well as of deep regret, that a woman, priding herself upon family consequence, should descend to the meanness, and vulgarity of the very lowest order of society;— a perfect compound of avarice, and rudeness. Every incident either painful, or pleasureable, has made such an impression on my mind, that I shall find no difficulty to relate either the one, or the other, as they have arisen; though three days have elapsed since the breakfast scene, and other occur-

rences. And, as you are earnest in requesting that I would inform you of all particulars connected with this visit, I will do so, though with some reluctance; since I must expose my sister; and to one, who I know never was disposed to think very favorably of her.

At breakfast, the morning after our arrival, Miss Melville offered to save Mrs. Howard the trouble of making the tea.—She rudely declined—"she chose to make her own tea;—and Horace could pour out the coffee." I saw Miss Melville was hurt, though she endeavoured to conceal it. I therefore made a point of being particularly attentive, which I was happy to observe restored her serenity.

After breakfast, the weather being unusually mild, Sir James proposed a walk into the garden, to which I readily assented; as did Mrs. Howard, and Miss Melville. Lady Mitford, having been lately ill, declined accompanying us. Horace was gone to the stables. Sir James observed, it was

an excellent garden, and capable of great improvement, by a different mode of cultivation;—"and which no doubt you, Sir Charles, will soon have put in practice." "Sir James," I said, "it is not mine; nor will it ever be, 'till Miss Melville consent to the request, I have to make." Mrs. Howard turned quick upon me;—"And pray, Sir Charles, what request may you have so humbly to make Miss Melville?" "That she consents to take a sisters"—"Sisters! sisters!" repeated Mrs. Howard, looking at me most indignantly. "Yes, madam, I repeat it, unless Miss Melville agrees to take half the personal property, as my sister does, I never will accept these estates, to which the most exalted of of women has so generously relinquished her claim; and this in favor of a man, totally a stranger to her. If such then is her high sense of honor and rectitude, it behoves me to protect her, both from insult and dependence."—"Upon my word! brother, you are

quite in the heroics this morning. Last night Miss Melville asked to be your pensioner; and fifty, or sixty pounds a year, would have been doing very handsomely by the girl; you forget you have a nephew, who will soon require an establishment."—"I wish I could forget I have a sister; I should not then feel the mortification, to which your unworthy conduct subjects me.

Miss Melville turned away into another walk, early in the beginning of our debate. Sir James also left us soon after; but joined us again at the end of the terrace. I left him with Mrs. Howard, and went in search of Miss Melville; wishing to convince her, how highly I disapproved of Mrs. Howard's behaviour. In this too I was thwarted, by a shriek from another part of the garden, to which I hastened, and found it proceeded from Miss Melville's maid, a pretty girl, that was flying from the pursuit of Horace, who had surprised her, as she was

gathering herbs for the cook. He had treated her with such savage rudeness, as to occasion the shriek, which brought us to her assistance. On discovering Horace, whom the girl pointed out as the offender, my sister darted at him, and boxed his ears; and then flew back again to Sir James, who rather retreated, as fearing he should come in for a part of Mrs. Howard's manual exercise;---as, with all his gravity, his risibility was irresistibly excited. Mrs. Howard remarked this; and attacked him with---"You may laugh, sir! but it is a shame to keep such impudent husseys, who have no better employment than to corrupt the morals of all the young men, who may fall in their way."---"Nay, nay! my good lady," said sir James, "don't so unmercifully accuse me. It is not my servant; and, I think your son can explain this business better than I can."---"Indeed, I shall not ask him; but I'll make him smart for his folly."---"That you have done al-

ready, mother, for I feel the weight of your hand at this moment."—"So you shall, you young jackanapes, if ever I catch you free with the maids again."—"Now really, madam, if you were young, and not my mother, I should think you were jealous."—"Horace! don't provoke me! I will not bear your impertinence!" The impudent puppy put his mother's arm within his, and marched off, inviting her to hear *how, and all about it.*

Sir James and myself being left at liberty, I took that opportunity of telling him how much I regretted, that my sister's conduct towards her son, as well as Miss Melville, should be of such a nature, as to render it incumbent on me to declare my entire disapprobation of her reprehensible behaviour; how painful soever I felt the avowal. "If I am deficient in expressions of gratitude, I hope, my dear sir, you, and your amiable young friend will do me the justice to believe it does not proceed from insensibility, or unworthy

thus unprovided for by her, and remain possessed only of the very small income arising from the trifle left by her father."

Sir James having concluded, remained silent for some time before I could make him any reply. A situation so new to me, instead of elating, absolutely depressed my spirits; and it was several minutes before I could assure him, that I perfectly coincided with him in every sentiment he had expressed respecting Miss Melville.—That I was entirely ignorant, what the personal estate of my aunt might be, when I proposed that Miss Melville should divide it with my sister;—that such a proportion might be very inadequate to the proper establishment of one, who had been accustomed to the elegancies of life: but, to secure a suitable provision for Miss Melville, as the adopted daughter of Mrs. Melmoth, I must rely on Lady Mitford and himself to suggest, and arrange what they should deem proper; as I could, by no

means, leave this to Miss Melville's decision. Her liberality of setiments might induce her to consider the interest of others, and forget what was due to herself. "After Mrs. Howard's intimation," replied Sir James, "of apartments in the alms house for Miss Melville, I very much doubt if it will be in my power, or Lady Mitford's, to prevail on our young friend to accept of any other provision, than what her own little patrimony may afford her." —"It is quite consistent," I replied, "with that greatness of soul, which animates this noble-minded girl; but I cannot suffer you, my dear sir, to conceive such erroneous ideas of me, as to suppose I can be so mean spirited, as to take advantage of Miss Melville's generosity, and deprive her of almost the common necessaries of life: and before I can decide on my own plans, I must have a few minutes conversation with her. I feel the full force of the delicacy, with which she has arranged her plan, to give me con-

sequence, as well as affluence. Yet I cannot do such violence to my own sense of propriety, as not publickly to avow my obligations to one, who is an honor to her sex ;--I may add to human nature."

Horace now met us ; and we finished our walk ; as it is time I should my letter. Farewell.

LETTER XXII.

MISS ASHBOURNE TO MISS MELVILLE.

Wells, March 25, 1812.

My dear Emily,

WHAT can be the meaning of your long silence? We are alarmed for your health ;--we are anxious to hear what your arrangements are ; and whether your eyes and limbs are safe from the fangs of Mrs. Melmoth's virago neice, who, if she should happen to meet you, will have no mercy on you.

My father desires me to say, he advises and strongly recommends you to lose no time in procuring some respectable elderly lady to reside, and chaperone you; for so lovely a young woman (my father can make a gallant speech yet) with the addition of a fine fortune, will be an object, that requires a respectable female companion to secure you from the censorious remarks, to which envy, and folly, may subject you..–All papa's own;—and to which I thought it incumbent on me to reply— "Indeed, my dear sir, Emily does not require a duenna: A young companion would, I am sure, be more agreeable to her."–"No doubt it would, my dear; but our Emily has too nice a sense of propriety, not to be easily convinced, that the having a young thoughtless girl constantly with her, would be the means of attracting all the gay young men within twenty miles of Melmoth House."—"Then you must allow, my dear father, she would have the chance of a better choice."—"Your

spirits, my dear girl, sometimes approach to levity; but I will hope you do not mean exactly what your words convey. My health has long been in so precarious a state, that you soon may be deprived of my protection; and, highly as I respect Miss Melville, she is too young to supply the place of a parent to my Maria. Do not weep, my love; my illness, which has now continued so long, must have prepared your mind to expect an event, to which we are all of us doomed."—"Oh! my dear, dear father, talk not so to your Maria; I cannot support the anguish of parting with you. I own, I should very much like to live with our dear Emily; but my beloved father was always associated with every idea of happiness I could form, and such a plan, I am sure, would be delightful to Emily; and you would be a protection to us both. Our mutual care and attention would soften those hours of pain, my weak endeavours seldom can effectually relieve." "My

dear child, your kindness is always soothing, even in the most painful moments. If I have a wish ungratified, it is that you might find a protector, to whose care I could safely entrust your happiness." "Oh! do not name matrimony to me, I beg of you, my dear sir; I should make a shocking wife, I am sure."---"I have no reason to think so; and I hope you will not believe the scoffers of the marriage state, of either sex. My own experience, as well as the observations I have made of others, convinces me the fault is in ourselves, that there are so few instances of conjugal happiness. I was most truly happy with your amiable mother; and would all endeavour, as we did, to be so, seldom, very seldom, would there be an instance to the contrary.--- And, now, my dear girl, we are upon this subject, it may not be unseasonable, that I speak my sentiments more fully than I have ever yet done. And I do this, because you have lately suffered opinions to escape you, which,

if put into practice, will be the bane of all social comfort to yourself, and the man you may choose for a protector, when I am no more. And I would not advise you, or any one, to enter the marriage state with the determination of having the complete control over the actions of the other. This is a state of subordination insupportable to a generous mind; and can only be endured by those, who despise the oppressor, or have too much pride to expose their situation to the world; and from motives of kindness keep their unhappiness from the knowledge of their friends. The supreme mastery over ourselves is, what we should study to attain; and, by our constant endeavours to conquer our own faults, we shall learn to be the more favorable to those of others. This practice, my dear Maria, will teach us to feel our own insufficiency; and render us tenderly considerate for those imperfections in others, we find so difficult to subdue in ourselves. Bear in mind,

my beloved child, whatever provocation you may have, never to let a smile of contempt be indulged by you, on any action of your husband. The retort will go to your heart, and fix a fang there, never to be eradicated but by the hand of death.—I have tired *you*, my love, and exhausted *myself*. A little sleep will serve to recruit me." I thanked him; and, adjusting his pillow, I sat down to write to you.

Alas, my dear Emily, how shall I support the loss of such a parent! He is the friend, as well as father; so mild are his commands, they scarcely appear to be such.

We have had no settled place of abode, since we left Cossemart, in Somersetshire; which living my father resigned in favor of Mr. Powel, a worthy man with ten children. Scarborough is strongly recommended by the faculty to my father, should his cough get better; and there, I hope, if we go, you will join us.

I am quite out of spirits. Write to

me soon. Your kind and friendly letters, next to the health of my father, are most dear to

Your affectionate

MARIA ASHBOURNE.



LETTER XXIII.

MISS MELVILLE TO MISS ASHBOURNE.

Melmoth House, March 28, 1812.

YOUR last letter, my dear Maria, affected me extremely; though I flatter myself, your fears have greatly exaggerated the danger of your excellent father. Long may you continue to have the blessing of such a friend to counsel, and advise you. Little inferior to your's, is my affection for your worthy father.

I did not write to you, Maria; I could not, though I made several attempts. My mind was so entirely occupied by a purpose I had in

contemplation to fulfil, that I could not divest myself sufficiently of that subject, to write even to you, the friend of my heart. I have now accomplished that point; and will proceed to give you an account of myself, and the personages assembled at Melmoth House. Brensly does not form one of the party, I assure you, notwithstanding he was very importunate to be received; his letter being accompanied by one from Lord Glenmore. Brensly's letter was as formal, as if drawn up by the parish clerk:---not a sentence, that seemed to flow from a pen guided by affection.---An eye to the heiress was visible in every line of his lordship's epistle, who will, in due time, be better pleased with my refusal of his son, than my acceptance. In truth, however agreeable Mr. Brensly may be thought by others, I conceived such an opinion of his want of proper feeling, from his first artful introduction, and persecution of me, that I felt

not only disgust, but something even of fear, when in his company.

To have done with him for ever, and give you an explanation of the manner, in which I have been employed since I wrote to you last. The attempts I made, at different times, to reconcile my revered friend to her family, are perfectly well known to you; and without incurring her displeasure, and perhaps endangering her life, I dared not renew this painful subject, at the time I most ardently wished to do so. Mrs. Melmoth publickly declared her intention of making me her heiress. Young as I then was, I did not feel elated, or gratified, by such a distinction; and soon after, hearing Sir Charles Belmont spoken of in terms, which excited my admiration, and pity, I formed the resolution (if Mrs. Melmoth should really make me her successor) of resigning all claim to the estates, to which he was heir at law. After this idea had taken possession of my mind, I felt a delight greater than

I can express; and seldom did I allude to the family, fearing I might give offence, and induce Mrs. Melmoth to add some clause to her will, that would effectually prevent my executing the project I had in view;—that of rescuing my best friend's nearest relation from a voluntary banishment;—restoring him to his native country; and my friend's character to the good opinion of the world.

To your good father I submitted my plan, immediately on the decease of Mrs. Melmoth. His approbation strengthened, and his counsel directed me in those points, which I had overlooked.

Sir James Mitford not being able to accompany me to town, he wrote to request Sir Charles Belmont to meet him at Melmoth House; and, to avoid giving offence, invited Mrs. Howard also. So many disappointments occurred, that we began to think they would not come. However, they did arrive here last Wednesday, accompanied by Mr.

Horace Howard, one of the most un-pleasant young men I ever met with. Though nearly of age, his mother treats him like a school boy; his actions certainly are more in character of a boy, than of a student at one of our universities.

I could not avoid feeling a considerable degree of tremor, when the carriage stopped at the door; but I had time to recover from the agitation, their arrival had thrown me into; as I did not make my appearance till Sir James came for me.---I was sitting in my dressing room with good Mrs. Caulfield.---I was was not so composed as I could have wished when Sir James entered. Kindly taking my hand, and finding me rather agitated, he proposed putting off our interview till the next day. "No, my dear Sir," I cried," this moment I will attend you."

I had no dread of meeting Sir Charles: it was Mrs. Howard's presence, that made me feel reluctant to appear. However, it was but momentary. Aided

by the goodness of my cause, my spirits rose, and I felt quite at my ease, before we entered the drawing room. Mrs. Howard's manners are such as to appal the stoutest heart, and could not but affect mine on so trying an occasion.

Mrs. Howard I am told was beautiful, when a girl. She must have been very young indeed; for, at this time, there appears to me scarcely any trace of beauty. She is coarse in person, as well as manners; frequently even vulgar; and her avarice exceeds any thing, of which you can form any conception. One instance, out of many, I will give you. Sir James, and also your good father, coincided with me in opinion, that I should be guilty of great disrespect to Mrs. Melmoth, if I had not a provision secured to me. Therefore, after explaining my motives for requesting an interview; informing Sir Charles of the different claimants under Mrs. Melmoth's will; and also of the alms house; I added, "I must be one of your pensioners, Sir Charles."

Before he could make any other reply, than by a gentle pressure of my hand, Mrs. Howard rudely asked if there were no apartments vacant in the alms house, that I might occupy. "Sister! Mrs. Howard!" exclaimed Sir James, and her brother.—I replied with more hauteur than the occasion required,— "That the house was already filled with the aged and infirm; and that I did not consider myself a proper object for such an asylum." The spirit with which I answered Mrs. Howard, served as a restorative to myself; and also checked her for a short time; but, upon every occasion, her malevolence breaks forth.

Oh! what a contrast to her brother! It is with deep regret, I reflect on Mrs. Melmoth's determination not to suffer her nephew to be introduced to her. Had he been known to my revered friend, she could not have retained a single prejudice against him. My dear father, too, would have highly esteemed him; and, I assure you, I

look forward to much pleasure, in the introduction of Sir Charles to Mr. Ashbourne, and to you. You will be delighted with him.—His person is of a commanding height. His manners are so gentle, that the most diffident mind would be reassured. Notwithstanding his eyes are brilliant, and penetrating, yet they are not oppressive. His complexion is exactly what I have often heard you admire;—manly, not coarse. His disposition serious, not dull; and, if he were in society calculated to promote conversation, he would take a distinguished share in it. That is not exactly the circle at Melmoth House. Sir James, you know, is very formal. Few incidents can provoke him to relax his features into a smile. Mrs. Howard is perpetually either finding fault, or weakly commending the follies of her son. I say but little; as I seldom open my lips, without hearing some sarcastic remark, that makes me repent my temerity.

Sir Charles has sent a request to see

me. Adieu. You shall hear from me again soon.

LETTER XXIV.

MISS MELVILLE TO MISS ASHBOURNE.

Melmoth House, March 29, 1812.

I LEFT you, my dear Maria, to attend a summons from Sir Charles, whom I found waiting for me in the drawing room. He took my hand as I entered,—"I think, my dear Miss Melville, I have heard you mention an elderly lady, residing in this house, who knew my mother. Is it too great an indulgence to be permitted to see her?"—"Not in the least," I replied, "I will, with much pleasure, introduce you. She is very infirm, since her last illness. I will thank you to wait just while I go, and give her notice of your kind intention." "You are ever good and considerate

to all," was his answer; and I went and informed Mrs. Caulfield, that Sir Charles was coming to visit her.

The poor old lady was quite delighted; and very anxious to appear to advantage. I put on her best cap for her; and saw her *finished*, as she said, for company. Then I sent Lucy to inform Sir Charles, Mrs. Caulfield would see him. I think he must have been near enough to hear me, as he was at the door almost as soon as Lucy left it. He took Mrs. Caulfield's hand; and so kindly enquired after her health, that the good old lady was quite overcome, 'till I made her smile through her tears, by telling her, I would bring no more gentlemen to see her, if she did not behave better. "Ah! my dear young lady, you know not what sad recollections the first sight of Sir Charles Belmont brought to my mind.—Dear Miss Julia was a lovely creature! You are very like her, sir." He smiled, and good humouredly replied;—"I was ever thought so; par-

ticularly in my complexion." "No! no! sir: that could not be; she was very, very fair; though, for a gentleman, I don't know but your complexion may be as pleasing."

Sir Charles gratified both himself, and Mrs. Caulfield, by asking several questions, about Lady Belmont, and the Melmoth family. And, when he took leave of her, requested permission to repeat his visits. I rang her bell for the servant, who attends her; and went with Sir Charles, to join Mrs. Howard and Lady Mitford in the library. Mrs. Howard was alone; and, as soon as she saw us, began with, "Pray, sir, may I enquire where you and Miss Melville have been? for I suppose you have been together, as you come in so." Sir Charles coloured highly, but replied, "You guess very truly, sister. Miss Melville has been so good as to introduce me to the venerable Mrs. Caulfield; and I hope it is not the only visit we shall make together."—"No! I dare say it

wont," tauntingly cried Mrs. Howard, but I think the indulgence might have extended to me also, for I should like to see the old woman myself." Heavens! I was near exclaiming, can these two beings be the offspring of the same parents? I offered to conduct Mrs. Howard to Mrs. Caulfield; but she declined it, saying she would look at her, after she had seen that part of the house, where the family portraits were. I shewed her the room, which Mrs. Melmoth appropriated entirely for that purpose; and where, for many years, she never entered.

The door of my dressing room being partly open, Mrs. Howard went in, and Sir Charles followed. I could not help sighing, as I entered this sweet little apartment, which overlooks the canal, that winds through the park; and is indeed the most pleasant of any room in the house. My dear Mrs. Melmoth's picture is over the chimney piece. Sir Charles enquired if that was the portrait of his aunt:

I told him it was; and considered it a good likeness of her.—"Why is it not hung up with the other pictures," (rudely interrogated Mrs. Howard) I replied, "Mrs. Melmoth sat for it to oblige me; and ordered it to be placed in my dressing room."—"Dressing room!" repeated Mrs. Howard to herself, as she walked to the window, to admire the fine prospect.

I took no notice of her rudeness, but requested Sir Charles to lead the way to Mrs. Caulfield's apartment. She expected us, and attempted to rise on our entrance, but would have fallen, had not Sir Charles quickly caught and saved her. He gently replaced her in her chair, saying, "My good Mrs. Caulfield, you have no occasion to rise." Mrs. Howard immediately added "Oh! exercise will do her good. I have no idea of people living in idleness." Poor Mrs. Caulfield, being rather deaf, mistook what Mrs. Howard said for a civility; and replied, in her mild manner, "You are very

considerate, my dear madam, and I will not hurt your feeling, by alarming you with my weak endeavours at paying the respect, which is due to the relatives of my late honoured lady." At this unexpected turn, which conveyed the best possible reproof, I could not help smiling; and though I saw Sir Charles bite his lips, when Mrs. Howard recommended exercise so unseasonably, yet he could not forbear enjoying the confusion of his sister. However, she soon recovered, and addressed Mrs. Caulfield in a louder tone;—"This is a pretty room, Mrs. Caulfield." "Yes, madam; this, and a sleeping room adjoining, my dear lady appropriated to my use, when I became too infirm to be serviceable as a housekeeper."—"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mrs. Howard, loud enough to be heard by Mrs. Caulfield, "you are a lucky old woman! It is not every servant, that can have such indulgencies, after they have ceased to earn them." A tear came into the

worthy woman's eye, and a faint blush upon her faded cheek, while I answered Mrs. Howard,—that she could not be acquainted with the deserts of Mrs. Caulfield, to think any indulgence too great for her. Sir Charles had risen, and desired his sister to accompany him, with which she readily complied. I kissed the good old creature, and begged her not to regard what had passed; and, assuring her I would soon return to her again, I left her in a state of tolerable composure.

This painful scene more than ever determined me not to accept the proposed division of a sister's part of the personal property.

A *sister's* share; so had Sir Charles kindly called it. The appellation of sister, had given such umbrage to Mrs. Howard, that early in the argument I left them, though not before I heard *country parson's daughter!* and *charity!*—from this unfeeling woman.

I must now give both you and my-

self a little respite. With affectionate regards to your dear father, believe me ever yours.

LETTER XXV.

Melmoth House, April 9, 1812.

My dear Maria,

TEN days have now elapsed since I last wrote. For three days I was confined to my room by a low nervous fever, brought on by the agitation of my spirits. I am now tolerably recovered, and yesterday dined with the family; but soon left them with the intention of writing to you. I had just taken my pen for that purpose, when Sir Charles tapped at the door, and opening it, said---" I fear you will think me an intruder, but I very much admired the drawings, when last admitted here, and wished to ask if they were executed by you." I assured him they were not; but by

a dear friend; and I hoped, when I took those down, he would allow me to have the portrait of Mrs. Melmoth. —"I have no claim to that, or any other part of Mrs. Melmoth's property," he replied, "Sir James Mitford informs me you positively object to such a division as I proposed; and I cannot but feel, you implicate me in Mrs. Howard's unworthy conduct, which has given me more pain, than any occurrence of my past life; and, if you still persist in your determination, I must abide by mine; and leave Melmoth House to-morrow morning." Startled by so sudden a resolve, I exclaimed, "Sir Charles! you cannot be serious!" —"Never more so in my life."—"Do you allude to the conversation in the garden?" I asked.—"Certainly, I do. Nor has it, for one moment, been out of my thoughts since Sir James informed me of the effect, which it had upon you."—"I am sure, Sir Charles," I replied, "you cannot think it possible for me to be insensible to your

sister's sarcastic remarks; and believe me, I would more willingly do as Mrs. Howard recommends;—take in a little work,—(Sir Charles suddenly rose from his seat, and agitated, walked to and fro in the room) than be obliged to receive favors from one so prejudiced against me."—"But, my dear Miss Melville, you surely will not be so unjust, as to confound the innocent with the guilty. Sir James Mitford has partly acquainted me with your plans; and to find myself totally excluded from your confidence, is most mortifying; and convinces me you consider me as a mercenary ingrate."—"Oh! Sir Charles, how can you put such a construction upon my actions. I know well I have pride. In that Mrs. Howard is but too just in her accusation; and that it has been wounded by her severely is most true; but never, for an instant, did I, even in thought, accuse you of approving her general conduct to me, who never gave her cause of offence."—"Offence!

my heavens! have you not behaved to us both with a generosity and delicacy the most unexampled?"—"Call it not generosity, I beseech you. What I did was no more than an act of justice, to rescue my best friend's memory from obloquy. And had you been as unworthy, as I hear you are deserving, I should have done the same; though not with equal satisfaction."—"What a heavenly mind do you possess!" he cried, and taking my hand, pressed it to his lips; declaring I should be his prisoner, 'till I could find bail for my good behaviour.

Sir James was passing. I requested he would come, and liberate me. He promised to be bound for me, and Sir Charles appeared more gay in the evening, than I ever saw him.

To-morrow the servants are to be assembled in the saloon, to be informed of their several bequests. Some day next week the tenants are to dine here. I requested Sir Charles not to suffer any particular demonstrations of joy,

'till I had quitted Berkshire. He attempted a reply, but hesitated; and I thought he perhaps did not approve my interference. I said, " It is of no consequence."—" I must differ in opinion with you," said Sir Charles, " for, I assure you, I am always shocked at the bell ringing, and revelling, which are so frequently exhibited upon the death of a respectable character, to celebrate the coming of an unworthy successor." With these sentiments I could not but be pleased; and I think, my dear Maria, I have made you some recompence for my long silence; though I have not written half what I intended to say, or you would wish to hear.

One circumstance I must not omit, as I know it will be pleasing to your good father. Sir James and dear Lady Mitford have promised to remain with me 'till all business is settled with Sir Charles. I am then going to their house, 'till I have fixed on some place for my future residence. And hope

to pay you and your father a visit, soon after I have accomplished this part of my plan. Let me hear from you soon.

LETTER XXVI.

SIR C. BELMONT TO MAJOR YORKE.

Melmoth House, April 25, 1812.

FOR the life of me, Henry, I cannot help feeling as if guilty of a dishonorable action, in taking such fine property from Miss Melville; notwithstanding she almost attributes my aunt's leaving it to her, to the unhappy malady, which had affected her reason in her youth; and at intervals, to the latest period of her existence. She also declares she should have acted in the same way to the most worthless of beings, had he stood in the same degree of relationship as myself.

On my expressing my reluctance, as I must very much abridge the

means of exercising her usual benevolence; she replied, " Indeed you do not; for by the arrangement, you and Sir James have made for me, I shall have sufficient to gratify my wishes in that, and every other respect. Though your aunt committed to my care considerable sums, to be applied to charitable purposes, I never, in a single instance, disposed of any part, but as the almoner of Mrs. Melmoth. Therefore it is to you, as the successor to their kind friend, will they look, for a continuance of their usual benefactions.—" I think, my dear Miss Melville, I have heard you have a brother, who may require assistance, though I am informed you are ignorant of his residence; but, if you can give me any clue, depend upon my utmost exertions to discover him, and promote his interest by every means, you have put in my power."—" Alas! Sir Charles, your interesting yourself in the welfare of my poor unhappy brother, is highly grateful to me, though I have too

much reason to fear he is now beyond the reach of human assistance."—"If you will condescend to confide in me your reasons for concluding he is no more, I will investigate the matter: conviction in this case is more supportable than doubt."—"True, and from memorandums and letters, I found in my dear father's escritoir, I can, without difficulty, relate to you all the particulars, that have come to my knowledge. Unhappily, my brother had an uncontrollable temper, which neither mildness could soften, nor severity correct; and even at the early age of fifteen, he had contracted debts in the village, to discharge which, reduced his parents to the necessity of curtailing many of their comforts. During one of these distressing periods, Captain Blewet, a friend of my father, called on him in his way to Portsmouth, where he was going to take the command of the Queen East Indiaman. Observing that the spirits of my father were greatly depressed, he

appeared so much concerned, that my father was induced to confess his affliction was occasioned by the misconduct of his son. Captain Blewet offered to take William out with him. My father hesitated; but William himself coming into the room, and being informed of the proposal, entreated my father to accept of it. As a forlorn hope, my good father gave his consent, and his friend assured him he would take no less care of him, than of his own son, who was to be his companion in his voyage. William, on his part, gave strong assurances of obedience, and attention to his captain; repeatedly promising that his future conduct should be such, as to merit his parent's approbation. Still, some sad misgivings, which they could not suppress, added to their sorrow at parting with their only son; and these operated so forcibly, that, for several months after he was gone, my father dreaded to open a letter by the post, fearing that he might have some pain-

ful intelligence of one, who had already occasioned him so much uneasiness.

Nor was it long before his too well grounded apprehensions were confirmed by a letter from Capt. Blewet, informing him, that William had left his ship, on their touching at St. Helena. When it was under weigh, William was missing. However distressed, Capt. Blewet was under the necessity of leaving the island without him. A note was afterwards picked up by the cabin boy, directed to the captain. This informed him, that William had entered as a common sailor, on board a king's ship, returning to England. The name was not mentioned; but there being only two the Royal George, and Arethusa, in the harbour, the day before he was missed, and both having sailed in the night, there could be no difficulty in finding him on their arrival in England. Capt. Blewet added, "I suppose, my good friend, you will see your son, before you receive this unpleasant account from me. I wish

it were in my power to speak more favorably of his general conduct, while on board my ship; and, it is with much concern, I have observed his predilection for low company. In my opinion, this never can be eradicated, but by corporal suffering; and, were he a son of mine, I would not make a single effort to obtain his discharge."

My good father could not divest himself of the feelings of a parent, whatever the errors of the child might be. He reflected, it was not the British sailor of former times, whose blunt generosity would relieve a fallen enemy as a friend, which had been the admiration of other nations, with whom his son was to associate; but the reputed thief; the suspected depredator, were sent to mix with our brave defenders; where there was a greater probability of corrupting the morals of their comrades, than of being reformed themselves.

Under such an impression, no wonder my good father wished to recall

in seven years after his death, I should be at liberty to make use of his moiety.

Though the time has elapsed, it is not my intention to appropriate it to myself, as I cannot refrain from cherishing the hope, that he is still in existence; and that the opinion and principles my excellent father took so much pains to inculcate on his youthful mind, have not lost their effect; but will return before he is called away.

No one could hear,---could see---my father deliver those doctrines of his faith, but must feel the force of every argument he advanced in their support. His exemplary life :---his very countenance,---was an indication of his heart."

The angelic daughter ceased her pious eulogy; but her heavenly countenance beamed with enthusiastic animation, after she had concluded her little narrative.

I listened to the magic of her voice with unceasing admiration; and it was

some time before I could thank her for her communication, and assure her I hoped to prove myself not unworthy her confidence. Her figure was the most interesting you can conceive. She was in deep mourning for my aunt; only a large veil thrown over her, which shaded one side of her beautiful face, while the other was open, and discovered the striking contrast between her lovely complexion, and her sable habiliments.

We had wandered to a distant part of the garden, while the rest of our party were amusing themselves in the conservatory, hot-house, &c. My fair companion seemed inclined to join the family, to which I did not object, though I knew few minutes would elapse, before my ungracious sister would give severe pain to this amiable girl. And, even in less time than I expected, Mrs. Howard poured forth a specimen of her malevolent disposition. On returning to the house, Lady Mitford observed Mrs. Caulfield

sitting at her window, and kissed her hand to her.—"Pray, who is that woman," asked Mrs. Howard, "who engrosses two rooms to herself?" Lady Mitford replied, "she was the daughter of a clergyman, who, dying, left a large family; and she, with her sisters, were obliged to submit to servitude;—that Mrs. Caulfield was very young, when the late Mrs. Melmoth's mother took her into her family, to wait on the young ladies. Her attention, and care of Miss Melmoth during her illness' when abroad, had endeared her to my aunt; and she was considered more as a friend than a domestic."—"Two rooms for her;—and two for Miss Melville!" (muttered my sister) "had my strange aunt lived a few years longer, she would not have had any place for herself, without building; and, I dare say, the black coats came about her like rooks." No one took the trouble to answer her, and we passed into the house.

We have been here a month, busi-

ness having been unexpectedly protracted by the illness of Mr. Burney, the solicitor. I feel no inclination to depart; and Mr. Howard is well satisfied with the quiet, our absence procures him; therefore, in every letter, he requests my sister not to hurry to town on his account. But Mrs. Howard is rather in an awkward predicament at this time, being unwilling to leave me here, and yet anxious to go to town, in consequence of a rumour having reached her, that Mrs. Cleveland Howard is in the family way;—an event very unexpected, as they have been married six years, and have had no children.

This circumstance, if true, deprives Horace of his chance of inheriting a small, but beautiful property. Mr. Cleveland Howard is only half brother to my sister's husband, and married a first cousin of his half brother. The estate in question is entailed to Mr. Howard's eldest son, if the neice of the testator should die without issue.

My sister's fondness for her son, and extreme avarice, make her consider this event as a grievous misfortune. We are all sufferers by her disappointment, and I do most heartily wish she would take her departure, and leave me here.

The inconsistency between my letters at this time, and five weeks since, is too obvious not to be noticed by you, but under all circumstances

I am your faithful friend,

CHARLES BELMONT.

LETTER XXVII.

MISS ASHBOURNE TO MISS MELVILLE.

Wells, April 26, 1812.

My dear Emily,

I AM, beyond expression, indignant at the meanness, and vulgar insolence of that Mrs. Howard. After a sacrifice, which no other young woman

but yourself, would have made, that she should treat you with such continual insult, is beyond all endurance. You ought not to submit to such unworthy behaviour from any one. And I am not a little surprised, that you, whose manners are so truly refined, can condescend to remain under the same roof with her, an hour longer than you are obliged. Oh! I wish she had such a spirit as mine to deal with! I would be a very Sampson, and pull down the house upon my own head, but I would crack hers.

My good father, who approves all you do, spends much argument to convince me of the folly of contending with such a diabolical disposition. I believe he did not make use of that word; but as it is applicable to Mrs. De—vil, it may go. My father says yours is the true greatness of mind, that will not be deterred from putting in practice, the liberal suggestions of your excellent heart, though the ob-

jects are not exactly what you could wish them to be.

That Belmont too; I am not quite satisfied with him. He ought to prevent his sister from treating you with such repeated insult. And what becomes of your stiff guardian; and his plump smiling wife? Do they stand neuter, while Mrs. Howard is buffeting their darling Emily, as I have a thousand times heard them call you? I would not give one of my parrot's feathers to save the whole crew (your dear self excepted) from drowning.

But, Emily, this Belmont, whom you denominate amiable, and so very different from his sister,--ah! Emily, he has done nothing, that I can perceive to deserve your approbation, much less your admiration. Take care, my dear girl, you don't, with Mrs. Melmoth's bequest, give away your heart also.

With pleasure I inform you, my beloved father's cough is almost gone. You have no notion how very much

better he is, than when I wrote last; and we are going to Scarborough, in a few days. He bids me tell you, he longs to fold his daughter Emily to his heart, and personally confirm the approbation, which he has, it seems, slyly conveyed in writing, without telling me. I have long suspected that a flirtation was going on between you and papa. Well! be it so! never mind, Maria! while you are the object of admiration to the young, don't be spiteful to your friend for being beloved by a whole hospital of ancients.

I am in high spirits to day, preparing for removing to a new place; where I shall have new dresses; new acquaintance; and, best of all, new admirers. I am determined not to read my letter over again, in spite of some misgivings, which tell me there are some expressions you will not approve. Moreover, I have not time: my head, my heart, is enraptured with the delightful prospect of the havock I shall make amongst the beaux; and

the envy I shall create in the belles.—The belles! I dare say they will wish me,—wish me,—where do I wish myself? why, with the gay party I see walking before my window.

Adieu, Emily, I have ten thousand things to say to you, but must defer them 'till I arrive at dear Scarborough.

LETTER XXVIII.

MISS MELVILLE TO MISS ASHBOURNE.

Melmoth House, April 29, 1812.

My dear Maria,

MELMOTH House has been a scene of confusion for some hours, occasioned by the thoughtless pranks of young Howard. This day was intended to be a day of business. Sir James's solicitor, being recovered from a severe illness, had prepared papers necessary to be signed by Sir

Charles, previous to the conclusion of any other business. We were all assembled (except Horace) in the library, to hear them read by Sir James, who had not proceeded more than three pages, before we were alarmed by the most dreadful cries of murder. Lion, the Newfoundland dog, barking as if enraged to madness.

The papers fell from the hands of Sir James. One impulse actuated each individual; and all hastened to the place, from whence the cries had proceeded. Sir Charles first; and, as I was next in agility, I soon joined him; the rest followed.

The most grotesque figure, you can imagine, now presented itself; and it was engaged in a violent contest with Lion upon the stairs. A few minutes passed before we could discover, who Lion's antagonist was. Horace, knowing there was business going on, that would detain us a considerable time, thought he would amuse himself by taking a ramble about the house,

and visiting Mrs. Caulfield, who had, fortunately, allowed herself to be drawn into my dressing room, but a few minutes before. As a consolation for his disappointment in the pleasure he had promised himself by plaguing the old woman, he diverted himself with examining the contents of an old chest, which he found there. It contained various articles of female attire, of ancient date; all of which he strewed about the room.

The whim of dressing himself in some of these garments now occurred; and he selected what suited his fancy. With some difficulty, he confesses, he put on a hoop, and a gown, that had been his great grandmother's. High heeled shoes; and a flat hat, were not wanting to complete his toilet. And thus arrayed, he sallied forth into the garden.

Unfortunately, the poor old gardener was returning to the house, leaning on the arm of the groom, and one of the house maids. Jeffery is bordering

upon his ninetieth year, with his sight more perfect than his hearing. He could remember enough of his former mistress, for the appearance of Horace in her dress to bring her to his recollection; and the poor old man was so terrified, that he faintly exclaimed, "My mistress!" and fell to the ground. Both his companions quitted him, and ran frightened into the house.

No sooner had they reached the servant's hall, than Mary fell into a fit; and the groom, overcome with terror, was incapable of explaining the cause, before the tumult began upon the stairs. Horace, seeing the alarm he had occasioned, meditated to withdraw, and take off his attire. In endeavouring to make his escape, Lion met him, and would not suffer him to ascend more than two or three stairs, before he seized his hoop. The high heeled shoes, having retarded his flight, he took off one to defend himself, and keep of the enemy. This enraged the faithful guard to that de-

gree, that, when we arrived, the contest had become most serious;—Lion shaking Horace by the hoop; and he beating the dog with the shoe. Sir Charles, myself, and the butler, with difficulty, drew off the dog, unwilling to relinquish his hold on the hoop, though many a hard rap had he, from the heel of the shoe. A more ludicrous scene cannot well be imagined.

The poor old gardener was brought in, perfectly insensible. Sir Charles was highly displeased with his nephew, and insisted upon his going with him to see the mischief he had occasioned; and also to do away the impression that the appearance, which had so alarmed them, was supernatural.

Mrs. Howard, as usual, defended her son;—she thought it very strange indeed, if he might not amuse himself with a little harmless frolic.—"You cannot call that a harmless frolic, my dear sister, that has thrown a woman into fits, and perhaps, occasioned the death of a fellow creature."—"Oh!" she replied,

"you don't know but the girl may be subject to fits. And, as for the old man, it can make but little difference to him; as, most probably, the first hot weather would have killed him. However, I will order that dangerous dog to be shot immediately."—"Indeed, sister, you must do no such thing! the dog was in his duty. I cannot say so much for your son. Lion shall not, therefore, poor fellow, lose his life for being a faithful servant." Mrs. Howard, in very ill humour, pettishly replied, "I suppose he is a favourite of Miss Melville."—"If he is," cried Sir Charles, "nothing upon earth shall ever make me consent to his being used ill." A look of grateful thanks, and a pat or two upon Lion's head, who had just taken his station by my side, was all the reply I could make. Mrs. Howard, much dissatisfied, insisted, it was very unnatural, and inhuman in her brother, to prefer a dog to her son.

Horace, being disrobed, came in

very humble guise, and told his uncle he was ready to attend him, and make any apology, or amends, he thought proper. Mrs. Howard peremptorily commanded him not to forget himself, and meanly ask forgiveness of all the fellows, and wenches, in his uncle's kitchen. And, as for making amends, as he called it, not one shilling should be put into any of their dirty paws.

Sir Charles and Horace left her. I did the same to go to Mrs. Caulfield, whom I found very ill from the fright, which the noise in the house had occasioned. She, dear worthy soul, is so feeble, and shaken, that a very little agitation overcomes her.

Lady Mitford's grandaughter is here, a most engaging, interesting child, about four years of age. She is no favorite with Mrs. Howard.

I have often been astonished there should be so very great contrariety of disposition, manners, and principles, between a brother and sister, as exists between Sir Charles, and Mrs. How-

ard. She is a compound of all that is disagreeable; bad temper, pride, and avarice:—all these accompanied by extreme vulgarity. While her brother is not only opposite in the most essential points; but appears to me the most elegant in his manners of any, with whom I have yet become acquainted.

Sir William laughed at the vulgar phrases, his daughter picked up, which were rather a matter of amusement to him, than of serious admonition, and reproof. Sir William dying, his son was left to the care of those, who finding the present baronet of an amiable disposition, took great pains that he should have all the advantages of a good education. And, associating with the best company, during the vacations, which were always spent in the family of Sir Everard Mellish; and, when abroad, being introduced to the most distinguished foreigners, no wonder Sir Charles should be among the most accomplished, as well as best informed, gentlemen of the day.

Your letter, my dear Maria, is just received. I am not pleased with many of your expressions; some of them might become Mrs. Howard, but not my Maria. Do not, I entreat you, indulge yourself in such invectives; though I know they proceed from the warmth of your affection to me.

Mrs. Caulfield was worse in the evening. I sent for good Dr. Syms to visit her, as well as Jeffery; for both of whom he prescribed a composing draught, which I gave them. Jeffery is better this morning; but Mrs. Caulfield is, I fear, worse. Should she recover, I intend to propose, that she shall live with me, if I can succeed in a little plan, which I have formed. Though this worthy woman has apartments assigned her in Melmoth House, I do not like to leave her under the care of servants. She was in the place of a mother to me, when I first came to this house. All my little childish sorrows were poured forth on her friendly bosom. To soften then

the painful moments of her declining years, is a duty incumbent on me.

The thought has occurred, that if Dr. Syms will allow me to hire a part of his house, to the size of which I have heard him object, the accommodation would be mutual. His circumstances are not supposed to be very good. His family have been expensive, and still apply for assistance. Under his respected roof I should enjoy the feeling of protection; and I can afford to make him a handsome remuneration.

I will write again soon. I hope I do not feel any thing like reluctance to leave Melmoth House. Yet surely it is natural to have sensations very much resembling it, on quitting a place that has so many claims upon my affection. Adieu.

LETTER XXIX.

C. HOWARD ESQ. TO HON. G. BRENSLY.

George Street, April 29, 1812.

My dear Brensly,

WHEN you are silent, I suspect you are in mischief; and when you are communicative, you take care to let me know you are so.—Do not look to me for particulars of proceedings at Melmoth House: if you do, you will be egregiously disappointed. All that I hear, is from my brother, who, to his great comfort, has been alone for these last five weeks, in consequence of his wife, son, and Sir Charles, having gone into Berkshire to take possession of that property. This was a most unexpected event to the family, as it was understood, that the whole property, both real and per-

sonal, had been left, by Mrs. Melmoth, to Miss Melville. Mrs. Howard's information is, that Miss Melville, suspecting the validity of Mrs. Melmoth's will, determined to make the best bargain she could; and, upon yielding her doubtful claim to the Melmoth estate, and also that in Sussex, she manœuvred so skilfully, that her brother had been weak enough to present her with a sum not less than twenty thousand pounds.

Mrs. Howard's letters are filled with invectives against the reputed heiress, who, she declares, aims at nothing less, than to draw her brother in, to marry her. The account, which Sir Charles gives of Miss Melville, is so very different, one can hardly suppose it to be the same person, of whom they are speaking. Sir Charles is undoubtedly fascinated by her manners and person, which he pronounces to be, in a high degree, lovely, graceful, and accomplished. To her liberality, and very singular greatness of mind

alone, he considers himself indebted for his grandfather's possessions, and not to any doubt as to the validity of Mrs. Melmoth's will, which the law must have decided in favor of Miss Melville, had not this amiable girl so generously yielded her claim, in favor of the relatives of her patroness.

I suppose, before this, you have forgotten there is, or ever was, such a being in existence, as Emily Melville; and all your rapturous effusions are poured forth at the feet of some other goddess. I hope you have recovered your good looks, which it must be allowed you did once possess.

Our mercantile concerns have not yet suffered by the melancholy list of bankrupts, which have lately appeared in the papers. Next week we expect there will be a crash, by which our house will be effected: but we are prepared for it.

I have been, and still am, under great anxiety for my dear Caroline, who is now far advanced in her preg-

nancy. Although we have been married several years, this is the first time of her being in that situation; a circumstance which I expect will disconcert my brother's wife, though he is so kind as to congratulate me on the prospect of my becoming a father.

This is a long letter for me. If you have not ceased to be a bachelor, shew your gratitude by writing a longer in return.

LETTER XXX.

MISS MELVILLE TO MISS ASHBOURNE.

Melmoth House, May 6, 1812.

I FLATTERED myself, my dear Maria, all would be arranged; and that every opportunity for Mrs. Howard to gratify her malignancy, would end. I have been kept in such a constant state of agitation these last

three days, that I retired early this evening, to relieve my mind by conversing with my kind affectionate friend.

Against Sir Charles I have nothing to alledge. His behaviour to me is uniformly kind, and attentive. I have several times taken an airing with Sir Charles, and Horace. This is a source of displeasure to Mrs. Howard, who takes care to say something to mortify me, the instant I return. Nor does little Charlotte Mitford escape the effects of her ill humour; she takes every opportunity of tormenting the child for her attachment to me; and she, but too naturally, fears, and dislikes her. An instance of this occurred the day before yesterday, that overwhelmed me with confusion. Sir Charles, Charlotte, and myself, were in the drawing room. Charlotte whispered, but loud enough to be heard by Sir Charles,—"May I hate Mrs. Howard?"—"No, my love, you must not hate any one," I replied. Sir

Charles, who was sitting on the sofa, desired her to come to him. She was very unwilling to comply, though he takes great notice of her, and she is very fond of him. She seemed half afraid of venturing near him.—"My dear little girl," said Sir Charles, "you appear afraid of me: I shall not hurt you."—"Wont you? your mamma would, if she could have caught me!" Smiling at the mistake of the child, he replied, "I have no mamma, Charlotte."—"Yes! yes! you have," shaking her little head doubtingly.—"That cross lady is your mamma; and I would hate her very much, if I might. She made grandmamma cry; and says she detests Miss Melville."—"Oh fie! Charlotte!" I cried, "you are mistaken."—"No! no! I am not!" Her innocent countenance corroborating her assertions, as she stood in the centre of the room. She continued,—"She calls Miss Melville names; says she is a sick-plant." (A sycophant I suppose she meant.) I reprimanded

her for repeating what she heard; and told her, no one would love her if she told tales.—"I do not want her to love me," she cried; "and, when she called you names, I told her, she was a naughty woman; and I wished she was gone. She was very angry with me; and as red as the collar of Samuel's coat. She jumped up, I thought, to beat me; but the door being open, I ran away from her, and came to you." Sir Charles kissed her; bid her be a good girl, and no one should hurt her; adding, "I hope you love me now, Charlotte?"—"I don't know."—"Surely, you know if you love me?"—"Do you love Miss Melville?" asked Charlotte. An electrical shock could not have surprised me more; and, in my confusion, my scissars divided a beautiful piece of lace of Lady Mitford's, which I had in my hand. How Sir Charles looked I know not; but he hesitated, and Charlotte repeated her question, adding, "Don't you know if you love Miss Melville?"—"Yes,

my dear; no one, who has the happiness of being acquainted with Miss Melville, but must love her."

I could not acquire courage to look up; and Charlotte, having now become good friends with Sir Charles, was playing with him as usual. When, on a sudden, she ran to the door, and exclaimed, "Oh! I hear her coming; she will whip me." Shutting it again, she crept under the sofa. I suppose her little hand had moved the bolt of the door, as Mrs. Howard, on trying it, could not gain admittance. Conceiving what had happened, I flew to the door, and opened it.--Oh! never can I erase from my memory the countenance, that now presented itself. Malignancy was the most predominant expression. She began an "Ha, ha, ha!"----and, clapping her hands, Fine doings! ha, ha, ha! Sir Charles Belmont locked up with Miss Melville! ha, ha, ha! How delighted will Lord Glenmore be with his son's amiable bride!" Sinking with unde-

scribable confusion, and shocked at the import these insinuations conveyed, and which this malicious woman appeared so capable of circulating to my disadvantage, my recollection for an instant, seemed to have forsaken me; and a kind of stupor took possession of my faculties. I was roused, I believe, by Sir Charles seizing his sister's hand, and insisting on her leaving the room; and I had the presence of mind to move the sofa, so that Mrs. Howard saw the child crouching below it. Sir Charles persuaded Charlotte to leave her hiding place; and again returned to Mrs. Howard, insisting on her quitting the room. He attempted to lead her out, but she resisted; and he declared he would carry her, if she would not depart quietly. At last, she withdrew with Sir Charles. Charlotte had crept out from under the sofa. The door being near, she never got upon her feet, 'till she was in the lobby, where I heard her run, calling for grandmamma, grandpapa, every step.

I was now left alone; and went immediately into my apartment, that I might not be exposed to another visit from Mrs. Howard; and give vent to those tears, that unworthy woman has so frequently caused me to shed.

This was to be a day of successive mortifications to your Emily;—for, after the painful scene I have related, I was in a few minutes interrupted by Lucy, who came from Mrs. Caulfield, to request me to go to her; she had been very anxious to see me again before dinner. I immediately obeyed the summons, though I could have wished to have spent the remainder of the day by myself.—"My dear young lady," she began, "I am very unhappy about you: although I am nearly confined by my increasing infirmities, the occurrences of the family will find their way to me; and it gives me great pain to hear Mrs. Howard behaves so ill to you, because (as I am told) she thinks Sir Charles will soon be married to you."—"Married! married!" I ex-

claimed;—"my dear good woman, don't believe what they tell you."— "Sir Charles is said to be a good, as well as a handsome gentleman; and it is such a one I hope my dear Emily will choose."—"When I do marry, I trust it will be to one deserving the approbation of my friends, amongst whom my dear Mrs. Caulfield has the first claim to such a distinction."— "You are very good, my dear child, and ever was so. Sir Charles often visits me; and, this morning, when he was here, I had a great inclination to ask him if it was true, that he was to be united to Miss Melville." I started from my chair in agony. "For heaven's sake! my dear Mrs. Caulfield," I cried, "never ask such questions of Sir Charles, or any one else; you will kill me with terror, if you do but hint at such an event." I was quite breathless; and the poor dear woman was so truly concerned for the fright she had occasioned me; and so anxious to remove the cause, she de-

clared, that for fear any one should be misled as she had been, she would tell those who came to her room, even Mrs. Howard, or Sir Charles himself, that I had no thoughts of him; and should be very much offended with any one, who presumed to suppose I liked him better than Mr. Brensly.—" Mr. Brensly!" I cried, " I never had the most—"

The servant now came in with Mrs. Caulfield's dinner, and I retired to my room in a state of mind not to be described. Lucy was waiting to assist me in dressing. I soon dismissed her, though I could easily perceive she suspected something was the matter, and was very much bent on finding out what it was,—" Do you hear Sir Charles, madam ?"—" Where ?" I asked.—" In the drawing room, madam; where he has been walking this half hour."

As she opened the door, I heard him pace the room in apparent agitation; and, in a few minutes, he tapped

at my door, only, as he said, to request I would come into the drawing room before I joined the party, who were in the garden. I told him I wished to be excused from dining with the family to day; but I would soon attend him.

I remained only a few minutes; and when I opened the door, Sir Charles was advancing to meet me; and, taking my hand,—"Dear Miss Melville; can you pardon my leaving you, as I did this morning? I candidly confess my sister's conduct had such an effect upon my temper, as to prevent my return, fearing I should expose myself to one, whose good opinion I am most ambitious of deserving. I anxiously hope you will favor us with your company at dinner." "By your manner, Sir Charles, I think it is not what you expect; and I own I should prefer having mine in my dressing room."—"If you would allow me to dine with you, I should be delighted with such an arrangement."—"That is impossi-

ble, Sir Charles: and I am sure you are not serious. I own I do feel great reluctance to exposing myself to insult."—"Insult," cried Sir Charles, "you need not apprehend from Mrs. Howard. And, be assured, my lovely friend, no relation, or connexion of mine, shall remain at Melmoth House, who is incapable of appreciating such superior worth.—Those tears, my dear Miss Melville, pain me to the very soul."—"Excuse me, Sir Charles — I know it is very weak in me to be thus affected: but till very lately, I never had a harsh word, and scarcely a frown applied to me. I am, indeed, a spoiled child; and perhaps it is necessary I should be taught to know my own insignificance."—"You will have to endure our company only for this day. We go to town to-morrow."—"To morrow! and do I drive Sir Charles Belmont from his house? I cannot suffer it. I will go immediately to Sir James Mitford's."—"I am very much grieved, my dear Miss

Melville, that the arrangement we have made, should not meet with your approbation. I say *we*, because I have consulted your friends, Sir James, and Lady Mitford, who have been kind enough to say they will continue here, during the time their house is under repair. I hope to return in a few days, to enjoy the society of Miss Melville, and her friends, with more pleasure, than my sister's unhappy temper will permit any family to do, where she can shew authority."

The servant announced dinner. Sir Charles, with one of his fascinating smiles, said, "I wait your fiat, Miss Melville. Am I to take dinner with you here; or will you go with me?" And taking my hand,—"Which do you determine for?"—"We will join the family." He continued holding my hand; endeavouring to reassure me by a subject little calculated to produce that effect.

As we approached the dining room, he said, "Whatever prejudices you

may suppose my sister has, rest assured they will not be communicated to Lord Glenmore himself, or any part of his family."—We were in the dining room before I could make any reply, if I had had the power to do so. I was mute with astonishment, nor could I articulate a single sentence to undeceive him with respect to the situation, he supposes I stand in with Mr. Brensly. Several times has Sir Charles alluded to my acquaintance with that gentleman; and, I as often waved the subject as unpleasant to me. But never, 'till Mrs. Howard this morning held out a kind of a threat in allusion to my being to be united to Mr. Brensly, did it occur to me that such a report was in circulation; and, least of all, that it should be credited by any person here. Yet is it most painful to allow Sir Charles to leave Melmoth House under such erroneous impressions.

In the hope of a little sleep, to which my eyes have, for several nights,

been almost a stranger, I must bid you adieu; and resume my pen again to-morrow.

LETTER XXXI.

MISS MELVILLE IN CONTINUATION.

May 7, 1812.

IN continuation of my narrative, you must, my dear Maria, attend me to dinner, where we found Dr. Syms, and his amiable sister; an addition highly agreeable to me. Sir Charles seated me by himself; and, though he was, and ever is, attentive to all, he was more particularly so to me this day, than he ever had been before. Oh! let no one ever condemn others, because they shrink from the malignant eye of prejudice! Alas! Maria, my eye sunk beneath the scrutinizing glance of Mrs. Howard. Yet no guilt could I accuse myself of to-

wards this implacable woman. Sir James, and Lady Mitford, continually addressed me by the tender appellation of their dear Emily, and dear child; and all kindly intended to raise my drooping spirits. Not to be ungrateful for such marks of affection, I assumed a cheerfulness foreign to my heart. The supposition of my being engaged to Mr. Brensly, had the precedence of every other thought; and I retired to my own apartment, when we left the gentlemen; and wrote part of my former letter to you.

I really dreaded going into the company of Mrs. Howard, whose chief delight appears to be in wounding my feelings: nor did she lose a favorable opportunity last evening. The subject of the jewels of the late unfortunate queen of France, that led to such fatal consequences, was introduced by Horace, which I now think was previously concerted. Mrs. Howard observed, how very extraordinary

it was, that Mrs. Melmoth had no jewels.—"She had a great many," I said.—"Then where are they?" she rudely asked. Sir Charles spiritedly replied, "Miss Melville answers no questions calculated to excite painful retrospections. It is of no consequence," he continued, "whether there are jewels, or not."—"I humbly beg your pardon, Sir Charles; it is a matter of no concern to me, if Lady Belmont wears wax, for pearls; or paste, for diamonds, in place of those our grandmother wore, when she was presented, on her marriage. It is nothing to *me* where they are. The losing, or finding them, will not affect me."—"Mother's broke out in a fresh place."—"And pray sir!"—"Oh! don't *pray*, mother, you're always in a passion when you do." I had no occasion to make any reply, as Sir James, and her brother, took up my cause; for it was evidently directed *to* me, or *at* me; and so warm were they in my defence, that she absolutely

wept with vexation. However, Sir James said, that, after the *observations, exclamations,* and *insinuations,* Mrs. Howard's retort conveyed, he must request Miss Melville to inform Mrs. Howard where they were. I replied, I never had seen the jewels alluded to: that I had heard Mrs. Caulfield say, they were new set for the event, the disappointment of which had occasioned Mrs. Melmoth's illness:—that Mr. Melmoth put these jewels into a private drawer, in an Indian cabinet, the key of which was given, with several others, in a small box, to Mrs. Howard, the evening of her arrival at Melmoth House. Mrs. Howard declared she never had seen any of the jewels, though she had examined every--- She paused, as conscious of having gone farther than she intended; but, recovering herself, she added—"I concluded they were in a beautiful little rose wood box, I have seen in Miss Melville's dressing room." Lady Mitford replied with quickness,

"That box, madam, was sent to me from Italy; and Miss Melville did me the favor to accept it."—"It is the same," I cried," and I use it to keep my own little ornaments in."—"I should like to see them, of all things;" said Mrs. Howard. I rose to comply with her wishes; but Sir Charles, taking my hand, reseated me; saying, "Not one step, Miss Melville, shall you go; nor shall it be brought to gratify my sister's unwarrantable curiosity." Lady Mitford whispered me to go to Mrs. Caulfield, and enquire particularly the situation of the private drawer. Sir Charles heard her; and, rising, said, "I will save Miss Melville the trouble." And, taking the key from Mrs. Howard, left the room.

He soon returned with a drawer, wherein were several parcels sealed up; and, as we conjectured, so secured by Mrs. Melmoth. In a shagreen case was the miniature of Sir William Belmont, richly set with diamonds; as was also one of Mrs. Melmoth.

Youth, excepted, she retained very much the same countenance. Sir Charles's emotions, on viewing the portrait of his father, could not but affect those present. The tears ran down his manly cheek, as he examined the lineaments of a parent, whom he remembered, but as the shadow of what the artist had here described as young, and handsome.

The representative of the high spirited Augusta drew a sigh from the humane bosom of her compassionate nephew. Mrs. Howard was too much engrossed by an examination of the beauty, and richness of the ornaments, to bestow a thought on those, who had worn them, or on those they were likely to adorn; except the portrait of her father, which she expressed a wish to have, that she might wear it, as she said, in remembrance of him. Sir Charles too plainly saw the motive for this request, to comply with his usual grace; though he did not withhold it from her. Yet he enquired, if

she had lost the one, she had of her father; which, if he was not mistaken, exactly resembled this, excepting in the circle of brilliants; and, he hoped she would part with that to him, as she could not have occasion for both. A superb necklace, and ear-rings, Sir Charles requested my acceptance of, which I declined, as not suited to my situation in life; and in a manner not to give offence, though, on reflection, I have no doubt it produced this mortifying reply;—"At some future period, Miss Melville will not, I hope, be averse to accept a bauble, that may receive a value, but not add to the intrinsic worth of the wearer." The fool bowed her assent. Oh! how vexed with myself I was; and I have no doubt but Sir Charles alluded to my union with Mr. Brensly. Every thing seems to combine to strengthen that opinion in him.

After several ornaments given to Mrs. Howard; an elegant ring to Lady Mitford; and one, of inferior

value, to Mrs. Mary Syms; Sir Charles was returning the remainder to the drawer.—"Bless me!" he cried, "here is a letter in the drawer;" and presenting it to me, "It is for you, Miss Melville."—"For me!" I exclaimed in surprise; and taking it, the well known characters at once informed me it was the hand writing of my dearest Mrs. Melmoth. Like meeting unexpectedly with a long lost friend, did I press, first to my heart, then to my lips, the inanimate paper; reading this affecting superscription,—"To Emily Melville, my dear, adopted child."

I was in the act of breaking the seal, when a thought came across me;—"What might this letter import? It possibly may contain some request, or injunction, not now in my power to comply with; and, perhaps may create much trouble, and disappointment to those present, should they be induced to forego their expectations. My indecision was too apparent not to attract the observation of the company.

All were silent; as waiting to have the contents communicated. I did not long keep them in suspence; having come to the resolution of destroying it unread. The fire being out, on account of the warmth of the evening, I took one of the lights from the chimney piece; then, setting fire to the letter, I threw it into the grate. An exclamation of astonishment burst forth, and—"What are you doing? you have not read the letter!"—I heard from Sir Charles, who made an effort to save it from the flames. He did not succeed, as I caught his arm, just as he was in the act of grasping it. —"What motive could you have, Miss Melville, to destroy a letter, without reading the contents, interesting to you no doubt, as coming from the hand of a friend you so highly esteemed."—"The very reason," I replied, "that induced me to destroy it; apprehending it contained some request, or injunction, to disobey, or comply with which, could not fail of

occasioning much uneasiness to myself, or some of the company present."—"In every instance," cried Sir Charles, how superior are you to us!—I cannot express,—I dare not express, my sentiments in language adequate to my feelings, or your merit." Sir James, and Lady Mitford, highly commended my presence of mind, in not suffering my curiosity to get the better of my prudence. Alas! I cannot apply that term to myself as I could wish. Mrs. Howard, whose curiosity is excessive, was the most disappointed of the party. Soon after this incident, we separated for the night; and this morning—yes, this morning, did Mrs. Howard, her son, and Sir Charles, leave Melmoth House.

Mrs. Howard, in taking leave, said in a low voice to me, "Your Bath expedition is no secret to me." I was asking for an explanation, but she was already in the carriage; and Sir Charles, pressing my hand to his lips, assured me, I never should be annoyed

by any of his family again, but himself. Ah! I fear, I might with truth have replied, his company was too agreeable to me, to be considered an annoyance.

Oh! how relieved, how distressed did I feel, when I heard the carriage drive from the door! I stood motionless, 'till Lady Mitford tenderly folding me in her maternal arms, said, "My love! my dear Emily! you have been severely tried; but you have conducted yourself nobly. Your spirits will soon be restored to their usual serenity."—"No, No!" I replied, weeping on her bosom; "it cannot be. That cruel woman has wounded my feelings upon every occasion. Pardon my weakness, most revered of friends. I am indeed very unhappy."—"Alas! my dear girl, I am grieved you should have met with such ingratitude; but let me add, it is only in the sister. Sir Charles is deserving the sacrifice you have made, and fully appreciates the worth of our dearest Emily."—

"Oh!, no! he will despise me. Mrs. Howard endeavours to impress him with ideas inimical to my—my—" I wept, and could proceed no farther. Dear Lady Mitford's kindness soothed, and restored me to some degree of composure, before Sir James, and Dr. Syms returned. Mrs. Mary Syms went to Reading early in the morning; but will come to us again in the evening.

Soon after Sir Charles, and Mrs. Howard were gone, Mrs. Caulfield sent to request to see me. I went to her, and found her very ill. Sir Charles had kindly taken leave of her, and also of poor Jeffery, who has scarcely recovered from the effects of his fright.

Next week, I intend taking possession of my apartments at Dr. Sym's, if Mrs. Caulfield is well enough to be removed. The Syms family appear to be very much pleased with my being an inmate. This is extremely gratifying to me. Mrs. M. Syms will conti-

nue here to assist me in the little arrangements I must necessarily employ myself about for some days. When Mrs. Caulfield is under the care of our good Doctor and his family, I think I shall be more at liberty to pay you, and your dear father a visit.

I will not suffer myself to dwell on the occurrences of the last five months. In part of that time, I include Brensly's tormenting behaviour to me. For nearly twenty one years of my life, the death of my dear father excepted, (for of my mother I have but a faint recollection) all seemed to combine to yield delight to the happy Emily. And 'till these last ten weeks, every action had the approving smile of those around me. Surely, I never could deserve such indulgence; or I must be strangely degenerated in a short time, to call forth such severity from one, I am not conscious of having offended.

Tell me, dear Maria, what could Sir Charles mean by saying, "He

could not express, he *dared* not express, his sentiments in language adequate to his feelings." Is he afraid of Mrs. Howard?—It must be so! He is fearful of calling out her ireful marks of dislike to me, if he expresses any sentiments of approbation, where I am concerned.—Yet his reproving eye frequently check'd her.

Sir Charles told Lady Mitford, that the great difference of age between Mrs. Howard, and himself, had given her a kind of authority over him, when a boy, which, at this time, he felt a degree of reluctance to oppose, like that which would have arisen in the dread of a contention with a parent. Adieu, dear Maria.

LETTER XXXII.

HON. G. BRENSLY TO C. HOWARD, ESQ.

Scarborough, May 10, 1812.

NO! my friend, I have not forgotten there is such an angel upon

earth, as Emily Melville. Infidel as you are, I should tremble for your Caroline, were you much in the society of that most charming woman, without your guardian at your elbow. Mine is a lost case; she will not have me, she swears. No! not quite so bad as that;--though her affirmation I consider as tantamount to an oath.

I felt devilish queer for a week, or two after her letter arrived. She is a noble creature; and, I declare, if I were Belmont, I would move heaven and earth, but I would obtain so rich a prize. His lordship too expressed much disappointment. Something has flashed upon my mind, that my father's engagement to spend some of the winter months with his old friend Sir James, was all pretence. I must be satisfied of this before I proceed any farther.

It was even so, Howard; and I have brought my father to confess, that hearing Miss Melville spoken of by Sir James, and Lady Mitford, in terms

of such high commendation, he was anxious I should obtain her; and for that purpose, promised to visit his friend in those mouths, he seldom is able to quit the house. I remember we were all surprised, that my father should have made such an engagement. Had I known such a scheme had been in agitation, without being apprised of the object, who was to take, or reject me, I would sooner have gone to the antipodes, than thus to be exhibited. My greatest consolation is, that neither my father's prosing friend, nor Miss Melville, knew of my degradation. To be sure, I did utter some strong expressions upon the discovery. The room too, shaking with my violent agitation, gave his lordship some sharp twitches, making him cry for quarter; which I graciously granted, and am returned to tell you. I had once a great mind to be jealous of Belmont. Ten days ago I should have been so; and one of us had laid sprawling ere this; but a beautiful

pair of black eyes invites me to stay a little longer in this grovling world; and, as I have been lately convinced that Emily dislikes me confoundedly, it is as well to reconcile myself to the stage of life.

Scarborough is the present abode of the black eyed damsel; and is also at this time the residence of Lord Glenmore, and his son George. How did all this happen, you cry? This certainly was not the direction I intended to take; but Harriet, and Sophia, wished to go to Tunbridge Wells, instead of soberly waiting on papa, at Scarborough. And I also discovered that his lordship had a greater inclination for my company, than he ventured to avow. I offered my services, an attention he was pleased with, and which I am sure is due to him; for, to say the truth, he has on many occasions been kinder to me than I deserve. I am very proud; and don't like to lie under too many obligations. To offer to attend him to a place more

than 200 miles from that, I had engaged to visit with a party, was a great favor; and to Scarborough we came about ten days ago.

But I am wandering from the subject of the black eyed girl, who is to recompence me for my dutiful sacrifice. The second morning after our arrival here, as my father was returning from taking the waters, leaning on my arm, three ladies passed us, one of whom, in taking her handkerchief out of her ridicule, drew out a letter with it. I stepped forward to pick it up, and restore it to the owner. Pity my innocence, Howard; which who could guard, since the fates decreed it should be endangered by the witchery of a half worn out letter. No sooner had I got possession of the precious relic, than the hand writing arrested my attention, and impeded my pursuit. To behold Emily Melville's writing, fixed me immoveable, 'till the ladies were out of sight. An irresistible curiosity took possession of my facul-

ties, and impelled me to put it into my pocket.

I like to read young ladies' letters; particularly when they are very angry, or just upon the point of falling in love. Their letters upon that subject are so animated; so descriptive of the tender passion; given too in such glowing colours, that such a poor ignoramus as myself would be in total darkness, were it not for the blessed invention of writing. My father, seeing me put the letter in my pocket, strictly enjoined me to return it to the lady, who dropped it. "You may be assured I will, sir,—when I can find her;—but I don't even know her face; and it is not directed to Scarborough."—"Then, George, you had better destroy it." "Dear sir, you surely would not have me destroy a lady's letter!"—"I would not have you read it; it is unbecoming a gentleman to pry into the confidential communications of friends."

His lordship must certainly have been an invisible spy, when the string

broke from those manuscripts of the Melmoth family, or he never could have given me so smart a fillip. I assured him, his son was saved from being guilty of any such shocking breach of honor.—I begged that he would observe the tattered state the letter was in; and that I did not believe I could read it.

We now arrived at our lodgings; and, while my father was arranging all his refractory joints, that he might have a quiet breakfast, I retired with my prize. It was, as I suspected, from Miss Melville to Miss Ashbourne. I was repaid in the way, which the old adage applies to listeners. I hardly know myself, such a *diable* does she represent me. It was evidently written before the death of Mrs. Melmoth. The greater part I could not decypher. *Morals*, was in a nook by itself, like the founder of an old chapel.—Now, for the life of me, I cannot conceive, what she can have to alledge against my morals.—I committed no murder.—

I did not steal,—even a kiss:—devilishly tempted, I confess!—Howard, you must agree with me, young women have no business with morals; and, as for old women, they are free to be as moral as they please; they are in no danger from me. Oh! how the saucy baggage handled me! My very ears tingled to find myself a subject for Emily Melville's descriptive powers to be exercised upon, for the amusement of her friend. I put it in my pocket again, and returned to the breakfast parlour before I was enquired for.

After a slight repast, I left Lord Glenmore reading; and sallied forth to enquire after Miss Ashbourne;—the lady who dropped the letter. I had little difficulty in finding her residence. Mr. Ashbourne is in ill health. He is a clergyman; and I believe the very same, Miss Melville was with at Bath. They live in a small house, the door of which was open; and a servant coming out, as I ascended the steps, I did not choose to send up my name;

but had recourse to my old stratagem of a convenient deafness. I enquired if Miss Ashbourne was at home. I was answered in the affirmative; with an application for my name. To this question I made no reply; but followed the servant.—He repeated it.—I shook my head.—The man was a fool, or he might have recollected, I had spoken. However, he ceased to be wise, and I followed him to a room, where a young lady was sitting alone. The servant, on opening the door, said, "A gentleman, madam, who I believe is deaf." She rose at my entrance; and the servant withdrew. I commenced,— "Miss Ashbourne, I presume."—She looked surprised; and intimated a wish to know who I was.—"I was so fortunate, Miss Ashbourne, as to pick up a letter, this morning, from Miss Melville to you."—"Miss Melville!" she exclaimed, "how know you, sir, that it is from Miss Melville? you have not I hope read it!"—"Indeed, I have," I replied. She appeared vexed;

and surprised at this open avowal; and again asked the favor of my name.—"Brensly, madam, at your serviee"—"Brensly! Brensly!" she repeated in astonishment;—and colouring,—as she said, "Surely! it was not very honorable in you, sir, to read a letter not intended for your perusal."—"I assure you, I did not read it all;—because part of it was obliterated. I am well rewarded for the infinite pains I took to gratify my curiosity, as it is the means of introducing me to Miss Ashbourne."—"I understood, sir, you were deaf."—"So I was, at the door. But I did not find it convenient to continue so." Miss Ashbourne tried to suppress a strong inclination to laugh; and I continued, "You see, my dear madam, whatever your friend Miss Melville may alledge against me, want of candour is not amongst the number of my faults." She drew herself up; and, with a pretty little motion of her head,—"Want of a competent share of effrontery will not, I am sure,

be imputed to you."—"Now, my dear Miss Ashbourne, be a little merciful, I intreat you. Had I sent my name, you would have been in high dudgeon; and refused to admit me; and it was not possible to entrust a lady's letter to a servant. I had no alternative." She laughed; and said, Scarborough would have furnished half a sheet of paper, and a wafer, at the least."—"Not a scrap, I assure you;—all bought up by the admirers of Miss Ashbourne, to indite sonnets on her beauty." She was rather disconcerted by this complimentary turn; looked at her watch with an air I was at no loss to comprehend; and I arose, but again sitting down,—"I hope, madam, you will not follow the example of your lovely friend, and set every female of your acquaintance against me."—"That, Mr. Brensly, is by no means the disposition of Miss Melville." I replied, "I never bring an accusation against a lady, which I cannot prove. Now, be candid as I am; and

own she has prejudiced you against me, and I shall be better satisfied with myself."—"That is very unnecessary;" answered the saucy minx, "and your too good opinion of yourself induces you to think meanly of others."—"Never was you more mistaken; for so highly do I value the approbation of your sex, that I wish every pretty woman, I see, to fall in love with me."—"Pray, sir, how long is it since you have made your escape from a place of reception for the insane. I suppose those are entitled to a reward, who can give information to your friends, where you may be found." And, touching the bell, "My servant can lay claim to the reward by taking the particulars of your person." The servant answered the bell. "What am I to expect next," came across me. —"John, inform your master, a gentleman waits to pay his respects to him." I was following John, but she prevented me, by saying, "I beg you will not go, sir, 'till you have seen my

father. I am not in the habit of receiving visitors, without communication with him." Here was a short turn I was not prepared for. Those parsons always give me the qualms. It is not because they are always so superlatively correct; but that they ought to be so. And I am not so depraved, as not to give them credit 'till I spy the wolf peeping through the sheep skin. I looked about me. There was no escaping; unless I had jumped through the window. For this wicked girl stood close to the door, either through malice, or fear; preventing me from being off, before her father came, which he did to my confusion almost instantly.

Mr. Ashbourne's appearance at once silenced, and abashed me. Eyes, that beamed with benignity, and universal charity. A smile, such as infants, in a state of innocence, enrapture the tender mother with, while sleeping on her lap. Such is the countenance of Mr. Ashbourne.

On his daughter introducing me to him, the name of Brensly seemed to strike upon his ear as a discordant sound; and he asked me, if I was known to Miss Melville. I answered *y---e---s*, with about as much extacy, as a country clown does upon taking a bride from the hand of a parish officer. I said, "I had been so fortunate as to find a letter belonging to Miss Ashbourne, which I had taken the liberty of delivering myself."--"And for your care of that letter, you are entitled to my best thanks, sir," said the wicked girl. The tone, in which this was spoken; and the manner, which accompanied it, surprised Mr. Ashbourne; but, before any explanation could take place, I made my exit;---just whispering to myself, "I go not there again."

Though Miss Ashbourne is certainly a very pretty girl, with a sensible animated countenance, and fine black eyes. which, after all, express more civility than those of Mr. Ashbourne,

yet *his* spoke a language I could too well interpret;—"You are no companion for my daughter." That Emily Melville has indisputably poisened the mind of this good man against me. I think not so of the daughter; for I am much mistaken if she dislikes an impudent fellow like myself.

Sir James Mitford might well be on the stilts to be honored with the guardianship of such a young woman as Emily Melville. And, what you tell me of her liberality, explains what Sir James meant, when he said, I should change my sentiments respecting that lovely woman. In such a conclusion he did me injustice. For Emily Melville, without a doit, I should in truth prefer to the first heiress in the united kingdoms.

I was at a ball last night; and was introduced to Miss Ashbourne by a friend, who I found was acquainted with her; and I engaged her for two dances, which enables me to say, she

improves on being better known. A little like myself;—and I expect to have some amusement from this lively girl, though not admitted within the walls of their cottage. I catch at every incident likely to drive out the image of the fair obdurate Emily.

Adieu, Howard.

Ever your's,

GEORGE BRENSLY.

END OF VOL. I.

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